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Official Records

6th meeting
Wednesday, 28 June 2000, 3 p.m.
Geneva

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Al-Douri (Iraq), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Proposals for further initiatives for social development

(a) Review and appraisal of progress since the World Summit for Social Development

(b) Proposals for further initiatives for the full implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Ermoshin, Prime Minister of Belarus.

Mr. Ermoshin (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Copenhagen Summit started a new stage of cooperation between the Governments of United Nations Member States in the sphere of social development. It promoted the establishment of social peace and stability, thus proving the commitment of the United Nations to the strategy of improving human living conditions.

In the course of transforming its economy, the Republic of Belarus is making active use of the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Copenhagen Summit. It is taking into account the positive experiences of other countries that are reforming their economies. Each country has its own specific features, both in the economic field and as regards social policies. For Belarus, the transition from a rigidly centralized economy to a market economy has turned out to be a difficult ordeal.

For us, the Chernobyl disaster is a wound that has not healed. More than 70 per cent of the total area contaminated with radiation lies within our country. Experts estimate the damage suffered by the Republic to equal 32 times our annual gross domestic product.

We appreciate the United Nations implementation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) programme for Chernobyl, which has made it possible for us to slightly ease the hardships caused by the tragedy. We remain hopeful that this work will be continued. On behalf of the Government of Belarus, I express our sincere gratitude to the charitable organizations from Germany, Italy, Japan, Greece and other countries that have assisted those who suffered from the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. I would like to add that everything that has been done to date has enabled us to make a great deal of progress, but still the consequences of the catastrophe at the nuclear power plant will affect not only the Republic of Belarus, but also other, neighbouring countries for decades and centuries to come. In this connection, I would like to ask the international community, for the good of other countries of the world, to unite its efforts to help the

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Republic of Belarus to overcome the consequences of the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

The costs related to the elimination of conventional weapons in line with international treaties also greatly taxed the economy of Belarus. However — despite its current problems, and unfortunately with scant help from the States members of international organizations — our Republic has completely fulfilled its obligations to the international community in this area.

Our national model for development is a socially oriented market economy that allows for the combination of private initiative and competition with active State involvement, and for the combination of economic efficiency with a high level of social protection for the citizens.

The period between 1996 and 1999 was decisive for the socio-economic development of the Republic of Belarus, as during this crucial stage crisis phenomena occurring in the country in the previous period were overcome. During those four years, the gross domestic product rose by 27 per cent and industrial output increased by 51 per cent. Our efforts to ensure economic growth facilitated the improvement of the labour market. The unemployed now make up only 2 per cent of all economically active members of the population.

Several indicators of the population's living standards have improved. Real wages increased by 150 per cent during those four years, and during the first five months of this year they rose by 16 per cent, as compared to the same period last year. With the assistance of the State, over those four years more than 145,000 families improved their housing conditions.

The Republic of Belarus ensures balanced development in the social spheres related to all aspects of life.

Reform of the educational system is ongoing. The Republic has achieved a reasonably high level of adult literacy — more than 98 per cent. With 262 university students per 10,000 residents, the Republic of Belarus is on a par with the average European level. Today we are exercising the right to education more actively than ever before. The State has managed to maintain the level of budgetary funds allocated to educational needs at 6.6 per cent of the gross domestic product.

The tasks of the Republic for the next five years are to approximate the developed countries' level of consumption of goods and services, to ensure rational employment and to meet international standards for social protection. Income policy will be aimed at increasing the minimum level of State social and labour guarantees, which should be truly consonant with the minimum necessary living costs. Our task is to raise State standards step-by-step so that they increasingly approach the level of subsistence wages.

In the near future, as part of pension reform, the plan is to introduce an individualized accounting system of social security contributions and to streamline the early-retirement procedure through the establishment of an occupational pension system for those working under special conditions and for selected types of professional activity. We have a number of benefits for veterans and disabled persons.

Families, maternal care and the protection of children remain central concerns of our social policy.

In recent years, the volume of pollutants emitted into our atmosphere has been reduced. The country's territory is free of both chemical and nuclear weapons. In this regard, we are one of the countries to willingly renounce its nuclear Power status.

The international community has arrived at the conclusion that one of its major tasks is to extend comprehensive assistance to the countries undergoing transformation to market economies. We are satisfied to note that the draft final document of the General Assembly's special session contains provisions that respond to the concerns of the countries in economic transition, including Belarus. We very sincerely support this initiative.

I would also like to stress the significant role played by the regional symposium on social and economic policy in the period of macroeconomic stabilization in countries in economic transition, which was held at Ashkabad in 1999. The analysis of the current situation in these countries and the specific recommendations will be taken into account in Belarus's social and economic policy.

I am certain that this special session will ensure that international cooperation in all its forms will be engaged so that effective social policy satisfying national needs and the interests of every individual can be implemented.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Prime Minister of Belarus for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon.

President Biya (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to address the Assembly. Allow me also to thank the authorities and people of Switzerland for their outstanding welcome and hospitality.

Five years ago, gathered at Copenhagen on the occasion of the World Summit for Social Development, we set out together in the Declaration and Programme of Action the principles and major guidelines for social progress for the years ahead — progress the need for which no one doubted. That consensus, which was remarkable in itself, rolled back the idea that social disparity sprang from some sort of inherent flaw in human societies. Of course, we were under no delusions. We knew that it would not be enough for us to analyse and condemn social ills to make them disappear, as if by magic. We were not unaware that it would be necessary to grapple with them with courage and determination.

Where are we five years after Copenhagen? What has become of the solemn commitments that were undertaken in the capital of Denmark? Answering those questions is the very purpose of this special session of the General Assembly that has brought us here to Geneva.

Let me say outright that despite the laudable efforts that have been made by numerous Governments, we remain far off the mark. Let me recall some of the commitments made: full employment, social integration, access for all to education and health care, equality between men and women and so on. These problems are outstanding challenges for which we will have to find new solutions by employing new methods that take into account the globalization of trade — or, to put it another way, of globalization itself.

But I would like to emphasize, as I did five years ago, a point that is particularly close to my heart. While social inequality, often to a shocking degree, exists in every one of our countries, be they rich or poor, there is still one element of disparity that is even more intolerable: the social divide that separates the North from the South. And when I say the South, I am thinking specifically of Africa, with regard to which one of the Copenhagen commitments provided for the need to accelerate development.

Let me be clearly understood. It is not for me to criticize or accuse anyone. I remain convinced that Africans hold their destiny in their own hands and that they must above all rely on their own will to emerge from underdevelopment. I recognize that international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Union, to cite just a few, as well as our bilateral partners, whom I would like to take this opportunity to thank, have provided us, and continue to provide us, with considerable and selfless support. However, I also know that if we want to succeed, that support, like our own efforts, must be commensurate with the problems that Africa continues to face. Those problems include the inequality in the terms of trade, the crushing debt burden, widespread endemic disease, civil and inter-State wars, population displacements, natural disasters, malnutrition, poor governance, corruption and so forth.

While some of these ills are, if I may say so, within the purview of African Governments, it is clear that the most of them will be solved only by exercising international solidarity. Is it really conceivable for our continent to continue to lag perpetually behind the rest of the world in economic development, the factor that that brings about social progress? It is a moral imperative for the international community not to let Africa become marginalized. It is also obviously in its best interest not to let this happen.

As we all know, underdevelopment and the poverty that goes along with it generate political and social instability and therefore lead to potential threats to peace and security. But along other lines, let us recall that poverty is clearly the root cause of the waves of immigration from the South that are crashing upon rich countries. Social development is therefore not only a priority for all of us; it is an imperative.

Despite the frequent difficulties in reconciling economic constraints with the demands of social development, Cameroon has endeavoured in recent years to place those demands in their rightful context. It has been assisted in doing this by the establishment of a favourable political environment, the return of growth, the control of inflation and, as I would like to stress once again, by the aid it has received from its foreign partners. Among those efforts, I would first

mention the preservation of peace, security and stability, the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law and the promotion and protection of human rights.

I would also like to mention the adoption and implementation of the 1998 Declaration on a national strategy to combat poverty; the Declaration on a sectoral health policy and the framework law on health, which emphasizes combating epidemics; the 1998 law on school guidelines and the sectoral educational strategy currently being finalized; the national plan of action on nutrition and the food security programme; the national policy document on employment that is now being completed; the new urban strategy; the national governance programme; and the programme to fight corruption.

As can be seen, the promotion of human dignity is at the centre of our concerns. Of course, actions have been undertaken to implement the measures adopted. There has been, in particular, a marked increase in the rate of schooling, which by 1996 had already risen to 75 per cent and which will improve further following the Government's decision to make public primary education free of charge.

Furthermore, medical coverage has been considerably strengthened through the creation of numerous health centres and a national centre to provide essential medicines.

As for the unemployment rate, although it is still high, it is progressively falling as growth begins again. Finally, significant initiatives have been launched, with the people's participation, so as to ensure the social integration of the most vulnerable strata of society.

Of course, we must recognize that we still have a huge task before us. But we are determined to continue our efforts. As I said in Copenhagen — I hope the Assembly will forgive me for repeating what I said then — social development and remains the ultimate objective of our economic growth. It is a matter of equity and a requirement for national solidarity.

This is what guides our action. Hence, it goes without saying that, faithful to the ideals of the United Nations, we abide by the principles and guidelines of the Draft Declaration and Programme of Action.

I, personally, have no doubt that these meetings, inspired by the spirit of human dignity and social justice and the need for international solidarity, will be a landmark and will justify the hopes that our peoples have placed in them.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the President of Cameroon for his statement. I now call on His Excellency Mr. Pham Gia Khiem, Deputy Prime Minister of Viet Nam.

Mr. Pham Gia Khiem (Viet Nam): On behalf of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, I wish to convey to the President of the General Assembly, and to all the representatives attending this special session of the General Assembly on social development, our warmest greetings.

The Vietnamese delegation shares the assessments reflected in the draft document on the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action. We are of the view that the most prominent result so far has been the consensus reached by the international community on the importance of social development, and the higher priority that countries are giving to social development in pursuit of their overall development objectives and policies.

The success of the international conference on the 20/20 initiative, which the Government of Viet Nam had the honour to host in Hanoi in October 1998, constitutes a vivid manifestation of the international community's awareness of the importance of social development. We note with satisfaction that in recent years, many countries have formulated and successfully implemented poverty reduction, job creation and social integration programmes, thus improving their peoples' living conditions and having a positive impact on social development.

However, many challenges and difficulties remain for each country, and for the international community as a whole, to overcome. We are witnessing the widening gap between rich and poor within and among countries. Many developing countries are lagging further behind. Wars and ethnic and religious conflicts have been using up our national resources, which otherwise could be used for social development. At a time when knowledge-based economies are contributing more and more to the growth of the world economy, in many developing countries fewer than 50 per cent of children go to school. A large part of the world's population continues to live with hunger and in poverty. In addition to all of those considerations, the lack of education and unemployment is becoming

fertile soil for the spread of HIV/AIDS and other social evils such as drug addiction, corruption, smuggling and organized crime.

In this context, the Vietnamese delegation holds that the need to strengthen international solidarity and cooperation in resolving the pressing social issues of nations and striving for social development has truly become more important and urgent than ever. Such solidarity and cooperation are essential in efforts aimed at reforming international institutions and trade, investment, intellectual property, environmental and other regimes in order to make them equitable and non-discriminatory in order to render effective assistance and services to the developing and least developed countries.

In the same spirit of solidarity and cooperation, the developed countries should provide preferential treatment for developing countries in market access, technology transfers and debt restructuring, reduction and cancellation. While expressing our great appreciation to those developed countries which have been living up to the commitment to reserve at least 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance, we appeal to the others to do likewise. The Vietnamese delegation hopes that the final document of this special session will be one of international solidarity and cooperation. I believe that that would be a success.

The Vietnamese Government continues to believe that just social policies, in pursuit of happiness for the people, constitute a strong driving force to release the people's creativity in nation-building. Our fundamental and consistent approach to socio-economic policies is to link economic growth with social justice. State investment in social sectors keeps increasing, accounting for more than 25 per cent of annual State budgets, with special priority given to investment in poverty reduction, job creation, education and other basic social services. As a result, the poverty rate was reduced from 20 per cent in 1995 to 11 per cent in 2000. In the year 2000, objectives in the elimination of illiteracy and the universalization of primary education have been achieved nationwide. Over 90 per cent of the population has access to health-care services. The population growth rate has been brought down from 1.8 per cent to the present 1.53 per cent, and in 1999 Vietnam was selected for the United Nations Population Award for this success. Sixty per cent of households have access to clean water; 80 per cent of the nation's territory is reached by television programmes and 90 per cent by radio broadcasts. The livelihood of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups has improved substantially, and hence they have become better integrated into the national community.

The Vietnamese Government is at present in the process of defining the socio-economic development strategy for the period 2001-2010. Even though the country remains poor, with an unbalanced budget and limited financial resources, in the formulation of strategies we will continue to give high priority to social development, especially to the promotion of education and training, which is aimed at enhancing the people's knowledge, developing human resources and nurturing talent. We will concentrate our utmost efforts on promoting broad participation by the entire society, especially mass organizations, in the process of social development. The same efforts will be made to improve the legal system and on administrative reform.

In conclusion, from this rostrum I wish to express our gratitude to countries, international organizations — especially those in the United Nations system — and non-governmental organizations the world over for their valuable assistance and cooperation during recent years, which we hope to further enjoy.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wen Jiabao, Vice-Premier of the State Council of China.

Mr. Wen Jiabao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the threshold of the new century, we have gathered, as scheduled, in the picturesque city of Geneva to jointly review the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted five years ago, to summarize the achievements and experience of different countries in the area of social development and to hold discussions on how to realize, in the process of economic globalization, social development that benefits all the peoples of the world. We are convinced that, with the concerted efforts of all the delegations here, this session will be a success.

Looking back over the five years since the World Summit for Social Development, we have noticed with delight that in recent years the issue of social development has received more attention from the international community than ever before, and that it has been given increasingly greater priority in the national development strategies of various countries.

National actions and international cooperation aimed at poverty eradication, expansion of employment and greater social integration have been constantly reinforced. Progress has been made in the social development of various countries of the world, though to varying degrees.

However, we have to be soberly aware that global social development still falls short of expectations. With regional conflicts and local wars breaking out from time to time, people in some countries and regions still suffer from the scourge of war and turmoil. The gap in wealth between the North and the South continues to widen, with developing countries facing grim challenges. The portion of the world's population living in poverty has become bigger, leaving many people with no basic means for survival and development. These cold facts tell us that global social development is a long, uphill battle calling for protracted and unremitting efforts from all Governments, peoples and the international community. The Chinese Government is ready to work vigorously with other countries for the cause of global social progress.

To this end, I would like to emphasize the following four points on behalf of the Chinese Government: first, it is the shared responsibility of the entire human race to safeguard peace and promote development. As humankind enters the new century, peace and development remain the two major themes of the world. A peaceful and stable international environment is the prerequisite for humankind's social development. China maintains that international affairs should be handled in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and that every country has an obligation to safeguard peace. The past century has seen monumental achievements, unmatched in history, in the social development of human society. It is a sacred mission for the Governments and the peoples of the world to achieve greater economic and social development and to seek common progress and prosperity for humankind in the new century.

Secondly, the right of a country to choose independently its path of development in the light of its specific conditions should be respected. We live in a diverse and colourful world. Given the differences among countries in terms of environment, history, cultural tradition and social system, and the disparities in their economic development levels, it is impossible to ask all countries to adopt the same development model. The world's diversity should be respected. The principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in each other's internal affairs should be upheld. The affairs of a country should be up to its own people to decide, and developing countries should have the right to choose, in the light of their own conditions, a development path tailored to their specific national characteristics.

Thirdly, economic globalization urgently calls for the establishment of a fair and reasonable new international economic order. Economic globalization is an inevitable trend of economic development, and it brings new opportunities to countries of the world. Nonetheless, due to the hardened irrational international economic order, the globalization process has failed to benefit all countries evenly. To truly realize a form of social progress that benefits all requires the establishment of a fair and reasonable new international economic order. Countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are all equal members of the international family, and all have the right to take part in the discussion and formulation of the "rules of the game" for international affairs. The reasonable propositions and demands of developing countries should be accorded adequate attention. In this connection, international organizations, and the United Nations in particular, should play an even bigger role. Developed countries should, by taking into account the common interests of humankind, resolve the debt issue of the poverty-stricken countries in an equitable and reasonable manner and provide developing countries with capital and technical assistance without attaching any political strings.

Fourthly, economic and social development remains a central task for the developing countries. Poverty and unemployment are acute problems for them. The key to their solution lies in economic development. It is a major task for human society, in its march into the new century, to enable developing countries to achieve growth and prosperity.

This task calls for assistance and support from the international community and, more important, for efforts by the developing countries themselves. They must keep abreast of the times, adopt carefully designed development strategies, always maintain social stability, seize opportunities, accelerate development, reverse their backwardness once and for

all and create a better tomorrow by relying on the hard work of all their peoples.

Over the past five years, the Chinese Government has made an effort to fulfil the commitments it made at the World Summit for Social Development. China has achieved sustained, rapid and sound economic development and has made progress in the areas of education, science, technology, health and sports, and in other social spheres. Through years of hard work, 1.25 billion Chinese people have made a historic leap from subsistence to a relatively comfortable life. The Chinese Government has given special attention to eliminating poverty and has succeeded, mainly by its own efforts, in reducing the size of the impoverished rural population from 250 million in 1978 to 34 million in 1999. By the end of this year, we will be able to roughly meet the basic needs of our impoverished rural people.

The Chinese Government also pays much attention to the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of the disabled. Over the past five years, the percentage of disabled children going to school has risen from 20 per cent to more than 70 per cent, and that of disabled people holding jobs from 67 per cent to more than 73 per cent. Rehabilitation services for the disabled have also developed considerably.

The development and progress of China — the world's largest developing country — constitute an important contribution to world social development. China may encounter many difficulties and challenges on its road towards development. Population and employment pressures, poverty, the gap between urban and rural populations and among different regions, and increasingly acute resource and environmental constraints are among the problems that we are faced with. We do not underestimate the difficulties, and we have the confidence, determination and capability to tackle these problems on the path to development.

At the dawn of the new century, mankind is looking forward to a beautiful future. It is the shared wish of the world's peoples to consign war, hunger and poverty to past history and to see peace, prosperity and progress prevail in the new century. The Chinese Government and the Chinese people stand ready to work tirelessly with all the world's other Governments and peoples for the attainment of that goal.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will next hear a statement by Her Excellency Ms. Orlanda Santos Ferreira, Minister for Employment, Training and Special Education of Cape Verde.

Ms. Santos Ferreira (Cape Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation from French text provided by the delegation*): One of the key features of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development was its timing. Just a few years after the outset of a new era in international life, which began in the 1990s, the pace of globalization had accelerated considerably. It soon became clear that in its economic dimension — which was the most visible aspect and the one with the greatest impact — it could not be slowed, much less halted, which aroused great uncertainty and insecurity in many countries and within broad sectors of the societies of those countries and elsewhere.

As a political act, the 1995 Copenhagen conference was remarkable because, on a massive scale and at the highest level, it made it clear that the social dimension of development could never be viewed as a delayed product of economic success, or even as its concomitant by-product. Social development was unambiguously affirmed as a goal in itself, in a break from its status in the 1980s, when it was only social variables that were taken into account in promoting development.

Five years later, the present special session has been convened to assess the period since Copenhagen by drawing the most relevant lessons and reviewing and renewing the appropriate strategies for attaining our objectives. We now view those objectives in a clearer perspective, because the quest for development for all is here being addressed in the context of a world in the process of globalization.

The exercise in which we are now engaged is marked by the inherent complexity of a subject about which we are still learning, and which also continues to be affected by the long-standing controversy about the roles and responsibilities of national and international plans. The political declaration we are to adopt will recognize that, in general, Governments, international organizations and civil society have made ongoing efforts to increase social well-being. Yet the results of those efforts remain insufficient and unequal.

Looking at the key themes of the Copenhagen commitments, such as the elimination of poverty, full employment and social integration, we can see that progress made on poverty in some places contrasts with a decline in other societies, and that in two areas great

disparities persist or have grown worse: on employment, any modest gains that have been achieved are precarious and unequal; and social integration, which depends on factors including poverty and employment as well as on many others, seems to be an increasingly difficult area.

Five years is certainly not a very long time in terms of assessing the impact of the Copenhagen summit in changing the worldwide social scenario. But our perception at this stage gives rise to serious concern, because we seem to be making an uphill effort. It does not look as if the battle is being won.

My country, Cape Verde, faces many obstacles to development, such as its status as a least developed small island State that has been victim of a lengthy drought. Nonetheless, it has long been devoting a considerable share of its institutional energy, budgetary resources and investment to the social sector. Cape Verde's rates of poverty and extreme poverty are 30 per cent and 14 per cent respectively; the unemployment rate is nearing 25 per cent. But our policies have still enabled Cape Verde to make important social gains over the years, with life expectancy rising to between 70 and 71 years, and rates of primary and secondary school enrolment to nearly 100 per cent and 30 per cent respectively.

At present, these gains continue to be supported by official development assistance, but the positive trend in Cape Verde's economic indicators is being seen as justification for withdrawing the assistance granted by our long-standing international partners. This premature withdrawal, if it takes place, will have an economic and social impact that runs counter to the objectives of the commitments and Programme of Action adopted at Copenhagen.

Today we recognize how inextricably linked are the objectives of economic growth, social development, rehabilitation of the environment, and peace and security. All of the elements are necessary for a human society to succeed. We are not free to choose one or two priorities, in the hope of succeeding regardless. Only one strategy can work: joint and synergetic action on all fronts simultaneously.

In addition to this important prerequisite for success, there is another question, just as vital, concerning the nature and reality of global interdependence.

While we subscribe to the accepted view of globalization as giving rise to unprecedented risks and opportunities, we believe in its fundamental ability to show us, gradually and inexorably, how the progress and even survival of all is interlinked. Indeed, it is only through a more integrated globalization framework that we will be able to put to the test the concept of international community as we have been articulating it strongly for decades, as well as its premise: interdependence on the basis of networks.

Because of the limitations encountered in terms of solidarity and of the nature of so-called free trade, sustained and consistent political will on the part of humankind is still lacking. This goal can be achieved, however, if interdependence, with globalization as a catalyst, becomes an increasingly clear imperative. The concept of international community must go beyond the stage of a politically correct idea that is of no consequence to governance at any level and be translated into an increasingly dynamic reality. Only then will it finally provide the key to a kind of cooperation that does not yet exist — a cooperation to which all involved must be committed unreservedly.

It would be difficult to address social issues adequately in the absence of a sound economic framework, at both the national and international levels. Furthermore, in a developing country, no external force can replace the impetus provided by the unfettered dynamism of its own social forces. Only a deliberate choice on the part of a society, along with the necessary action, can give rise to that impetus. However, we cannot expect the efforts of such a society to bear sustainable fruit in the context of an external environment that provides no incentives or beneficial interaction and that may even cause it harm through a relationship based on inequality.

It is becoming abundantly clear that in the context of ever-increasing globalization, unprecedented efforts must be made in the area of international relations. Such efforts are a key priority and will help strengthen the effectiveness and lasting nature of the resources, policies and measures that are used to enhance social progress and development at all levels throughout the world.

In our country, every day we must attempt to compromise between, on the one hand, economic reform and improvements to the public sector, and, on the other, the provision of affordable goods and

services as a matter of political responsibility for social well-being. In this respect, it is important to bear in mind that we must not confuse the means with the end and that the end is not economics but humanity.

We are confident that in the wake of the Copenhagen Summit, this important session will provide a strong impetus in the right direction.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Zobaida Jalal, Minister for Education, Women's Development, Social Welfare and Special Education of Pakistan.

Mrs. Jalal (Pakistan): I am grateful for this opportunity to address this twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. In view of the time constraint, I have circulated the complete text of my statement, which is being distributed in this room by the Secretariat.

In the closing decade of the last century, world leaders met at Copenhagen and envisioned that the international community would work together for the attainment of conditions in which the equitable development of all peoples is ensured.

Yet the goal that inspired us at Copenhagen remains elusive. For an unacceptably large number of men and women, the world remains as it was — a place marked by deprivation and misery, devoid of opportunities and even hope. This has happened against the backdrop of profound changes in the global economy. Vast productive forces have been unleashed, and yet the social indicators remain abysmal. Among the 4.4 billion people who live in developing countries, three fifths have no access to basic sanitation; almost one third are without safe drinking water; and one quarter lack adequate housing. The number of people living in absolute poverty has not declined.

Why is this so? Why is it that despite repeated assertions that the international community will not tolerate the perpetuation of want and misery, we continue to be confronted with the tragedy of persistent poverty?

The answer is not too difficult. At Copenhagen, the international community had recognized that in order to sustain social justice it was necessary to have broad-based and sustained economic growth. This was an acknowledgement of the simple fact that enunciating social goals is not enough — there must also be the ability to pay for these goals. Most countries lack this ability, for the benefits of recent developments have been grotesquely lopsided. The benefits of globalization are definitely not global but remain stubbornly limited and local.

Broad-based growth can be ensured. Resources can be generated that would permit funding for social programmes by all countries. But this requires a number of measures, including the following.

First, international trade rules should evolve in a manner that will ensure a truly level playing field, enabling developing countries to enhance their supply capacities and to compete with developed countries that have vastly greater resources.

Secondly, the debt burden of developing countries must be expeditiously addressed. Recent measures for the highly indebted poor countries are encouraging, but it should be realized that those countries account for only about 10 per cent of developing countries' debt. The rest is owed by low- and middle-income countries.

Thirdly, the international monetary and financial system needs to be imbued with greater equity and stability.

Fourthly, the persistent decline in official development assistance flows needs to be reversed.

Fifthly, the ability of developing countries to generate and acquire technology must be improved so that they can compete in the global economy.

On our part, despite a difficult financial situation and in the absence of an enabling international environment, we have tried to ensure continued investment in the social sector; we have mobilized additional resources for employment generation and poverty alleviation; and we have strengthened national institutions concerned with social development by enhancing their finances. As a result, investment in the social sector in Pakistan has grown at the rate of 15 per cent per annum. The budget for 2000-2001 reflects an increase of 50 per cent in resource allocation to poverty reduction, especially for the rural areas.

Primary-school enrolment of both boys and girls has increased from 55 per cent in 1995 to 75 per cent in 2000. The coverage of health facilities has been enlarged to include 100 per cent of the basic administrative units in all provinces. A comprehensive and integrated approach to poverty reduction has been adopted through the evolution of a poverty reduction

strategy paper. This is an action-oriented blueprint for poverty reduction. Details on it can be found in the circulated text.

Specific programmes such as the Social Action Programme, the Mass Literacy Programme and the Vaccination Programme to Combat Childhood Disease have been implemented, especially for the poor. The Government is setting up microcredit banks to provide the poor, particularly women, with self-employment opportunities. The Devolution of Power Plan has been developed to ensure the full involvement of the people in their own governance. The philosophy of this bottom-up approach is that all services can be delivered at the local level. The Government has launched an Integrated Rural and Urban Development Programme to create additional employment and income opportunities for the poor.

In order to ensure a meaningful follow-up to the Social Summit, we should focus on measures that would render the global economic environment more conducive to broad-based growth, and that would also assist the efforts of individual countries to meet the basic needs of their people. Instead of seriously addressing these key issues, there is an unfortunate, indeed perverse, focus on devising ways to sanction and punish countries that fail to meet arbitrarily defined social standards. Indeed, in the guise of social concerns, protectionist measures are being vigorously advocated and outright conditionalities are being forcefully proposed. The main motivating force behind these moves is groups that seek to protect themselves from increasing competition from developing countries. The calls for a new social architecture, as articulated by these elements, mask the desire for a new architecture of control, consisting essentially of measures to prevent developing countries from using their comparative advantage to compete in an increasingly open, global economy. The best way to address these concerns is to agree on minimum standards in relevant international forums and to provide the means to progressively implement those standards.

The social goals to which we all aspire are not beyond our reach. A properly structured global economy can provide us with the necessary resources, and a renewed political will can lead to the channelling of these resources, both at the national and international levels, to programmes to improve social standards. The outcome of our deliberations must reflect forward movement in both these areas.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Hussain Zaki, Minister of Planning and National Development of Maldives.

Mr. Zaki (Maldives): At the very outset allow me to congratulate the President on his election. Permit me also to convey to the Government and the people of Switzerland, on behalf of the members of my delegation and on my own behalf, sincere gratitude and appreciation for the gracious hospitality extended to us and for the excellent arrangements made for this important session.

I would also like to express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for their vision and foresight in helping to chart a future course of action towards achieving sustainable social and economic development in the new millennium.

It is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to address the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of the commitments of the World Summit for Social Development in a globalizing world.

Maldives is a small island developing State that looks to the world community with great expectations, especially as regards addressing issues of poverty, social integration and employment promotion, all of which have global dimensions.

In an increasingly globalizing world, integration into the world economy is not an option but a necessity. The Maldivian economy is based on two principal industries, fisheries and tourism, both of which rely almost totally on the international economy for their growth and development. They are also the largest employers and the source of livelihood for the large majority.

The external orientation of the economy and its narrow base renders the country excessively vulnerable to the vagaries of the international economy, which can have direct implications for the people's income and employment prospects. For countries such as Maldives that rely on the international economy for securing all their basic needs, a free and fair international trading environment, without protectionist measures of any kind, is essential in order to achieve sustainable

economic and social development, today and in the future.

In addition to external conditions, Maldives also faces many constraints intrinsic to the country. We are a small island nation with a highly dispersed population. This makes it difficult and costly to provide basic services and infrastructure. A shortage of both skilled and unskilled labour makes it necessary to rely on expatriate labour, which currently makes up more than 27 per cent of the labour force. Lack of natural resources, skilled labour and technology creates serious difficulties in diversifying the economy and reducing external dependencies. In addition, the country's extreme vulnerability to environmental threats creates further cause for concern and alarm.

Despite these constraints, under President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom's dynamic leadership Maldives has achieved impressive social and economic progress over the recent period, during which we have sustained a gross domestic product growth rate of about 6 per cent, with low inflation. We have also been able to meet many of the regional and international social development targets. In addition, human resource development programmes are being carried out, and strategic options for national development are being sought to achieve greater economic diversification and increase overall competitiveness.

We are at a critical juncture in our development history. Important gains are being achieved in alleviating poverty, employment creation and social integration. It is important at this time to sustain the development process through increased investment and sound economic management. Thus, we believe that the proposed graduation of Maldives from the list of least developed countries is premature. The graduation from least developed country status at this moment would place the country at risk of losing the gains that have been achieved. The country needs concessional aid and trade now as never before, in order to consolidate the gains we have achieved to launch the country on a path of self-sustained growth and development.

The support and fullest cooperation of the international community is crucially important as we strive to overcome the difficulties and face the challenges of globalization in the twenty-first century. It must be emphasized that greater efforts need to be made to meet the agreed official development assistance targets and to provide more concessional and grant assistance to least developed countries so that they can sustain development programmes and achieve stability and progress. Furthermore, international cooperation and assistance will also be crucial if we are to address the environmental problems facing small island developing States such as Maldives. I believe the time has come to forge new partnerships in development, partnerships in which the intrinsic vulnerabilities of countries are recognized and appropriate structures are put in place to offer global solutions to global problems.

For our part, I would like to reiterate the commitments we made at Copenhagen: to participate in and lend our cooperation to the global process of development and progress that is being forged at this gathering.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Noëline Jaotody, Minister of Population, Status of Women and Children of Madagascar.

Mrs. Jaotody (Madagascar) (*spoke in French*): In hosting the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, the Swiss Confederation is once again confirming its well-known commitment to social development. On behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of Madagascar, I am especially pleased to extend my heartiest congratulations to the Government and the people of Switzerland. It is also my pleasant duty to thank them for the very warm way in which we have been received.

Five years after Copenhagen, we are once again gathered to evaluate the progress made, to modify the focus of our approach in the fight against poverty and to improve upon the achievements made in social development. At the dawn of the third millennium, the world has changed, but poverty remains a painful affliction. While commitments have been made, results have fallen short of the objectives set out by the first World Summit for Social Development. The holding of this special session is therefore taking place at the right time and is a vital necessity for the achievement of social development on a global scale.

Our meeting is taking place after the holding in 1999 of several regional mini-summits that met to evaluate the progress made. Their results turned out to be negligible in the face of the scope and impact of the

problems identified at Copenhagen. Our meeting here will therefore bear the heavy burden of finding lasting and effective solutions that will bring about a firm commitment from each of our countries to implement this decisive stage of human life as we enter the third millennium. I believe that the elements of those solutions have already been determined through the outcome of the work of the Preparatory Committee, which was based on the recommendations on lasting human development adopted at various international conferences. However, those proposals will remain simply nice, abstract words without the expression and realization of firm and clear political will from each country.

As far as our country is concerned, in making the fight against poverty the priority objective of its programme of action, the Government of Madagascar has endorsed a set of international commitments, particularly those of the Copenhagen World Summit. On the basis of the Government's priorities and of international commitments, the Republic of Madagascar has since 1996 undertaken a significant number of reform measures, both at the level of institutions and in the area of sectoral and macroeconomic policy, that are aimed at promoting lasting and sustainable economic growth and at reducing poverty. Those measures have begun to bear fruit. The rate of growth, which was at 3.7 per cent in 1997, grew to 4.7 per cent in 1999. That economic performance was accompanied by a steady growth in employment and revenue that brought about a rise in demand. All of these measures and initiatives are being reinforced by the implementation of the framework document on economic policy, which will become the strategy document on the reduction of poverty that will be part of the overall framework of the national strategy to combat poverty.

After the Copenhagen World Summit, pursuing a new consolidated and multisectoral approach for the long term, in 1996 our Government initiated a process of drafting and implementing a national strategy to combat poverty that will become the overall point of reference for all programmes undertaken in the country. In order to do that, four guiding principles have been adopted: strong and lasting economic growth, with the participation of the poor; an economic, institutional and regulatory framework that favours economic growth and the reduction of poverty; the development of human capacity and the reduction of social inequality; and, finally, the strengthening of the social safety net and protection for the most disadvantaged groups. Well before this effort to establish an overall framework for development and poverty reduction measures began, the various ministries devised and initiated operational and synergy-maximizing plans and programmes with the aim of making their specific measures more efficient and to harmonize their respective actions.

We are also particularly pleased at the joint decision of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions to work together to reorient the macroeconomic structural adjustment approach towards a national strategy to combat poverty, which each Government should finalize between now and the end of the year 2000 with the active participation of all the active forces of each country and its development actors. Madagascar has taken this approach since 1997.

In view of the enormous needs facing us, we would like to propose that this session recommend, in order to reach the goal of this initiative, a search for new ways of financing the social sector and influencing economic development policies so that they contribute directly to poverty reduction and to social development. In this regard, we would like to reiterate here the importance of measures to ease the debt burden of developing countries within the framework of strategies to combat the apparently constant growth of poverty that the populations of those countries suffer.

Conversely, debt and its effect on social development programmes constitute one of the many issues that call for a firm commitment from recipient countries to practise efficient and democratic use of power at the national and local levels; to have national and local institutions that respond to the needs of the population and that make it possible for it to participate actively in the taking of decisions on priorities, policies and strategies; and to have an efficient public sector that serves its users.

In the process of developing and implementing the national strategy to combat poverty through different sectoral plans and programmes of action, our Government has endeavoured, in accordance with the Copenhagen text, to bring closely together the different development actors, in particular the private sector, civil society, decentralized collectives and the press. Along the same lines, we would like to recall and stress

the ongoing need to involve populations with the programmes that are relevant to them. It is for this reason that it is imperative for the financial instruments put in place by every institution to be adapted to that reality, and for communities to be able to take decisions directly regarding their development and to keep an eye on the allocation and use of public resources.

With regard to the ways of financing the social sector, we would also like to propose an approach that is consistent with bringing about the social inclusion and reintegration of groups of parts of the population that are marginalized by the economy. More specifically, this should be done by integrating those groups into the system of economic production by way of promoting the goal of full employment. My country would also like emphasis to be placed on the need to establish ways and means to better assist disadvantaged groups to implement their development projects.

Madagascar's message remains illuminated by the glimmer of hope our delegation brought with it to Copenhagen. May concrete commitments emerge from this follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development that will make it possible to reduce poverty in the world and to promote international solidarity for the globalization of a future of lasting human development.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Ramatou Baba-Moussa, Minister for Social Protection and the Family of Benin.

Ms. Baba-Moussa (Benin) (*spoke in French*): This special session on social development is of vital importance to my country and, even more so, to my Government. But before proceeding, let me thank the Government and the people of Switzerland and the Geneva municipal authorities for the hospitality they have extended to us in their wonderful country, which stands at the crossroads of cultures and civilizations.

The need to find adequate solutions to world concerns that will ensure sustainable well-being for all in an environment of persistent economic and social crisis impelled the United Nations to convene the 1995 World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen. The Government and the people of the Republic of Benin welcome the universal awareness which has mobilized national and international political forces to try to slow and reverse the growth of poverty and the collapse of social structures, which affect all the world's nations, and to create conditions conducive to sustainable human development and greater social justice. The commitments and measures adopted to those ends should sustain development efforts in every nation.

I am particularly pleased to recall the important meetings at which the war on poverty was the focus of debate: the 1996 Oslo conference on the 20/20 initiative adopted at the World Summit for Social Development; the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing in 1995, which reaffirmed that initiative, as did the Accra conference on burden-sharing; the World Summit for Children, held in New York; the Libreville meeting of heads of State or Government on an agenda for Africa on the threshold of the third millennium; and the Cologne summit of the Group of 7, which adopted the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, with a view to enabling those countries to benefit from consistent debt alleviation so that they can reallocate resources thus freed to the social sector with the purpose of reducing poverty among the most underprivileged groups.

A review is required in the light of such commitments to promote the well-being of peoples and economic and social development in Africa, so that any necessary corrections may be made. In that connection, my country, the Republic of Benin, has taken action in four areas: progress in reducing poverty and in helping the poorest and most vulnerable groups; progress in job-creation, education and health; progress in the promotion of good governance; and the establishment of a national programme of action for women and children. In 1996, after the Copenhagen Summit, Benin convened a national economic conference, followed in 1997 by an international symposium to study the concept of a common minimum economic and social norm, for which we had opted; this is intended to ensure the well-being of every citizen through a national community development programme. This constituted development at society's foundations, supported by essential social services — to which my country allocates 30 per cent of its budget.

Because of these great efforts, my country, which is already very poor, has lacked the resources to build up its productive infrastructure. That situation is even more desperate now that the globalization of the world economy and the liberalization of trade are exacerbating disparities among poor countries and

widening the gap between rich countries and poor countries, owing to the weakness of the poor countries' structures in these areas. Unfortunately, official development assistance to support the efforts of poor countries has greatly eroded. Consequently, most of Africa's least developed countries have not only been unable to meet their Copenhagen commitments, but have been unable to build a sturdy foundation for economic and social development. These are facts that we cannot conceal — and indeed, must emphasize.

It is important to stress that my country, Benin, in the framework of its initial structural adjustments, gave priority to the re-establishment of macroeconomic balance, to the detriment of basic social services. In spite of the increased budgetary allocations, the additional resources from our development partners and the improved management of the social aspects of development, additional resources are needed to launch a process of eradicating poverty and to make sure it is successful.

The social development of all the men and women of Benin is the goal and the challenge before us. We must take account of parameters relating to transparency, equity and efficiency. The present session should help us find ways and means to make additional resources available to strengthen the capacity of countries in difficulty to provide essential social services.

I sincerely hope that our debate will be successful and enriching, and that it will enable us to consider and assess how to follow up the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit, as well as to formulate new initiatives that will make it possible for the developing countries truly to eradicate poverty. I am convinced that all countries will have to implement the initiatives to be adopted at this session in a spirit of solidarity and regional and international cooperation. In that way we will be able ultimately to achieve a beautiful world unmarked by images of poverty; a dream world which is in fact possible, because it can be formed with the determination and the concerted efforts of all our countries. We shall do it, because we believe in it.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Dermot Ahearn, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs of Ireland.

Mr. Ahearn (Ireland): I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and the appreciation of my Government to the Secretary-General and to the Division for Social Policy and Development for the excellent preparatory work for this session. It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of Ireland and to reaffirm my Government's continuing commitment to social development. I also wish to fully associate Ireland with the speech made by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union.

I want to emphasize how the Copenhagen commitments have helped social development in Ireland, and how fully supportive we are of further initiatives to continue that process. One of the key tasks in the process is to convince people that social development not only improves the living conditions of less advantaged people, but also achieves economic development.

The tangible benefits have been seen in dramatic fashion in Ireland. As our economy has been growing at an unprecedented pace, unemployment is now below 5 per cent and long-term unemployment below 2 per cent. This compares with respective figures of 12 per cent and 7 per cent just four years ago.

Following Copenhagen, a National Anti-Poverty Strategy was put in place in 1997. It included a target of significantly reducing consistent poverty over a 10-year time-frame. Ireland was the first European Union member State to adopt such a global poverty target. In light of significant progress made towards achieving the original poverty target, we set a new target in June 1999 of reducing consistent poverty to below 5 per cent by 2004. Initial findings show that we are well on our way to achieving this new target. We now have the opportunity to effectively eliminate poverty in Ireland, and that must be our main policy objective. The influence of the Copenhagen process was paramount in the development of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

As part of Ireland's latest National Partnership agreement, negotiated between the social partners, we are reviewing and broadening the National Anti-Poverty Strategy to encompass areas which have not been directly included up to now. Existing targets will be reviewed, and new targets will be considered. The original poverty targets were set following extensive and innovative research. One of the most valuable elements of this was a clear demonstration of the deficiencies of looking at income levels alone, be they relative or absolute. The wider approach, which

addresses commonly acceptable standards of living, has proven itself to be both useful and effective.

The involvement of civil society in the process of poverty reduction and social development is becoming increasingly important. We must recognize this and provide an appropriate framework for this to happen. In relation to this, the Irish Government will shortly publish a White Paper on the relationship between the State and the voluntary and community sector.

In the period since 1987, successive National Partnership programmes have been negotiated with the social partners — employers, trade unions, farmers and, recently, the voluntary and community sector. These have created the widespread consensus on social and economic policy that has underpinned the successful transformation of Irish economic and social life.

Our relative success in recent years has been due not only to our own efforts but also to the support and policy guidance we have received from the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations itself, through the Copenhagen process. We were particularly pleased during our recent Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to facilitate the Council's preparation of a pan-European contribution to this Assembly as part of the implementation of the social cohesion strategy. Ireland very much supports regional cooperation on social development, which we have found so useful in Europe, and we would also very much welcome this cooperation developing further at interregional level.

The support Ireland has received internationally in achieving social and economic development has made us very conscious of the importance of such support and of our own obligations to less developed countries. Ireland Aid has been increasing rapidly. We have increased our official development assistance programmes in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Indeed, since the World Summit, allocations have more than doubled, rising to $241 million in 1999. This represents a volume increase of 22.8 per cent over the previous year. The Irish Government is determined to reach the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for overseas development assistance in the short term. The Government is currently considering a detailed financial and organizational road map to enable us to reach the target within the specific time-frame.

I warmly welcome the fact that this special session will formally endorse the target of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty by the year 2015. In order to achieve this target, flows of official development assistance will have to increase from their current levels. We will also have to work harder together to deal with such threats to development as the debt burden on less developed countries and the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS. Ireland has now mainstreamed the fight against HIV/AIDS in its development assistance programme and is devoting additional resources both bilaterally and multilaterally.

The huge burden of external debt on some of the poorest countries in the world impedes social development. I welcome the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, with its promise of broader, deeper and faster relief. However, there remains a worrying shortfall in the funding of the Initiative. Its slow progress in extending debt relief to more than just a handful of countries is also of increasing concern.

Our experience over recent years has shown us that the Copenhagen consensus is the way forward to people-centred, sustainable development that can eradicate poverty and create a stable world order. We are a country whose people have experienced underdevelopment, great poverty and high levels of emigration. We now know from recent experience that it is possible to eradicate poverty if we have the will to do so. This has to be based on national consensus, pursuing the right policies and a supportive international environment.

Ireland, therefore, is fully committed to the Copenhagen process and looks forward to being part of a committed global effort to implement it in the new century.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to Sheikh Falah Bin Jassim Bin Jabor Al-Thani, Minister for Civil Service Affairs and Housing of Qatar.

Sheikh Falah Bin Jassim Bin Jabor Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am particularly happy to pass along a message from His Highness the Emir of Qatar with greetings and wishes for the success of this special session, that it will achieve the expected results.

On behalf of my delegation, I take particular pleasure in extending to the President sincere congratulations on his election to lead this very important session. I wish him every success.

The 1995 World Summit on Social Development took a historic position in facing our countries' and peoples' future in a world undergoing transformation, as well as the challenge of the socio-economic situation being experienced by millions of human beings throughout the world.

The President took the Chair.

Today, as we review the objectives and progress made, we see evidence of social and scientific progress and an accumulation of wealth. We are now here to review the objectives we have achieved, taking into account social programmes and the progress made towards social development. But we must note the efforts being made nationally and internationally.

In fact, these problems have become permanent items on the agendas of regional and international forums and the core concerns of peoples and Governments, including in those countries not directly affected by these social problems. This interest has clearly been reflected in social programmes and policies. Here we could mention the examples of economic reform measures, reduction of public expenditures, combat against unemployment and growth of cooperation with organizations and other international bodies to collect international aid and the experience necessary for progress, as well as improving implementation and correction of trajectories so as to achieve the aims we seek.

Every society has its particular features and its own circumstances. For us, in Qatar, the major problem is scarce national manpower in view of the great development projects and service projects. We have therefore given the greatest priority to building a modern industrial base, using available resources. The State is also preparing the material infrastructure for development and is participating in the development of economic and social sectors. With the same impetus, great efforts have been made to develop human resources through a reorganization of programmes and institutions for education and training to better listen to the labour market.

Since we believe that social progress is a matter for all groups of society, particular attention is being paid to women, who now hold high State positions, including that of Under-Secretary of State; moreover, women occupy academic positions, serve as lawyers and have been elected to municipal posts. In 1998, Qatar established a Supreme Council for the Family because the family is the basic, fundamental unit of society. That council works to strengthen the family and its role in society, and to promote the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international legal instruments relating to the family. It plays an important role in protecting the family and promoting a variety of family issues. It encourages women to play an effective role in society, and is endeavouring to improve the status of working women.

In recent years, Qatar has thus seen vigorous movement in civil society and in the process of development. Thus, civil-society institutions, organizations concerned with the family and other specialized groups are working to lend impetus to development and to safeguard the gains that have been made. This is in addition to official efforts to build a united, coherent society.

On the instructions of its beloved Emir, the State of Qatar has reiterated its humanitarian commitment to societies throughout the world, whose concerns and problems we share. Regionally and internationally, Qatar is playing an important role through international and regional organizations. It is also participating in humanitarian relief activities and in ongoing humanitarian endeavours to meet its commitment to participation by addressing problems wherever they may arise.

To sum up the situation in global terms, we note that Member States are making tangible efforts to address social problems, and are making progress. But the key problems facing developing countries persist and in some cases are growing worse. In some places, we see poverty, hunger, diseases, unemployment and new social problems, especially among young people. We see ethnic conflicts growing worse, this is a drain on human resources, exacerbates socio-economic problems, and has an impact beyond the conflict zones. There are, moreover, indications that the gap between developed and developing countries is widening, and that there is an increase in poverty, unemployment, debt and other problems on the international agenda as a result of globalization. Although scientific and technological progress is being made and material

wealth is being accumulated, technological symposiums and other activities reaching broad sectors of the population are needed if the desired level of development is to be attained.

I am deeply convinced that this special session, which seeks positive results that will revive people's hope for a better life and a better future, will enable us to move further along that path.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. José Adan Guerra, Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua.

Mr. Guerra (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the President of Nicaragua, His Excellency Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, who is unfortunately unable to be here today, as he would have wished. For Nicaragua, this is a particularly important occasion because it provides an excellent opportunity to assess what has been done and the achievements that have been made since the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, with a view to setting new challenges and to confronting the twenty-first century with spirit, determination and solidarity.

Throughout its history, Nicaragua has been harshly afflicted by terrible calamities which have left scars of death and devastation on the nation's family and which have had grave economic, political and, of course, social consequences. But thanks to the enterprising spirit of our people and the firm determination of our Government, we can affirm today that Nicaragua has embarked on a difficult path, but with a clear objective: to achieve sustainable, just and equitable development.

We are today engaged in major structural reforms that are intended to have a social impact on the poorest members of the population. At the same time, we are formulating and implementing complementary programmes that will make it possible to lessen the possible impact of such measures on other sectors. That is a commitment by the Government, which needs the determined support of the active elements of our country: political parties, civil society and non-governmental organizations.

Since 1997, our economy has grown by 5.4 per cent a year, and per capita income has also risen by 2.3 per cent. The unemployment rate has fallen from 16 per cent to 10 per cent. Annual inflation has fallen from 12 per cent to 7.2 per cent, and current expenditures fell from 36 per cent of gross domestic product in 1990 to 27.6 per cent in 1999. Exchange rates have remains stable, private investment has increased after nearly 20 years of stagnation, and public investment has grown considerably. We achieved all of this in spite of additional reconstruction costs resulting from the catastrophe caused by hurricane Mitch.

We continue to fight one of the hardest battles we have ever had to wage: payment of our external debt, which has reached $6.5 billion, the equivalent of $1,300 per person. In per capita terms, this makes Nicaragua one of the most heavily indebted countries in the Americas. In 1999, debt service equalled 59 per cent of the social budget, and that figure could increase to 62 per cent if Nicaragua fails to obtain debt relief. The Government of Nicaragua has therefore sought the steadfast support of the international community in gaining forgiveness of our external debt, in line with the conditions set out in the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

It is important to note that extreme poverty in both rural and urban areas diminished between 1993 and 1998, although we acknowledge that high poverty rates persist. Over the same period, the illiteracy rate fell, and the average number of years of schooling rose for persons over 10 years of age. The statistics for infant mortality and mortality among children under five years of age have improved.

The strategy for strengthening the war on poverty has been carried out in two stages. First, the Government began a broad debate on causes and on possible solutions. In the second stage, interim goals were identified, matching programmes to available resources and developing a participatory system to follow up the progress of these programmes and to assess their impact.

Nicaragua's poverty-reduction strategy rests on three main pillars. The first is to seek broad-based economic growth with an emphasis on the rural sector, which is where the highest proportion of poor people and the greatest concentration of poverty in Nicaragua are found.

Secondly, we are investing in human resources, especially in the vulnerable areas, primarily in the areas of education, health and nutrition, in order to raise people's awareness and to increase productivity and investment.

The third pillar is the strengthening of a system of social protection and assistance that focuses on vulnerable groups living in abject poverty, whose goal in the short term is to ensure their survival and in the long term to put an end to the intergenerational cycle of poverty. All of these efforts include the broad participation of civil society and non-governmental organizations.

We are aware that it will be possible to carry out all of these activities and meet these challenges only if they are accompanied by resolute and concrete measures. Good governance and transparency in administration are basic and necessary to bring about political and social stability in our countries. Corruption must be combated in a comprehensive manner, and for that reason we have strengthened institutions such as the Office of the Comptroller of the Republic and the judiciary. We have also made significant progress in the decentralization of local governments in order to strengthen their capacity and thereby improve and diversify their services.

In the area of the vulnerability of the environment, we have also made conceptual and institutional headway. Central American countries subscribed, at the twentieth presidential summit, to the Strategic Framework for the Reduction of Vulnerability and Disasters in Central America, which set out guidelines for action in this area and a plan of action to achieve short-, medium- and long-term objectives.

At the international level, we have witnessed the emergence of numerous creative forces, such as the technological revolution, economic liberalization and globalization. It is clear that today it is very difficult to harness these forces so as to achieve peace, development for all and a more equitable distribution of wealth on the basis of international social justice. In the past two decades, increased inequities worldwide have undermined the progress made in the area of income distribution in many developed and developing countries. This growing inequity is perhaps the clearest indication that the dynamic development of the market alone does not guarantee that its benefits are reaped by all.

The Copenhagen Summit, held five years ago, is one of the most significant manifestations of the conscience of humankind, reflecting the belief that equity can be achieved only if it is envisaged as a common goal. It is the need to guarantee that the fruits of development are widely reaped that has led to the holding of these summits and to the proclamation of what we call "globalization of values", which means the extension to all spheres of the principles of the protection of human rights, social development, gender equality, respect for ethnic and cultural diversity and protection of the environment.

The commitments to be undertaken at this session will be the social challenges of tomorrow and the basis of democratic consolidation in our nations. Therefore its outcome must express the renewed determination of the richer countries to seek ways and means to enable the less developed countries, such as Nicaragua, to achieve the agreed objectives. The creation of a social development fund in which these countries participate along with international financial institutions will no doubt help make it possible for us to progress together towards the achievement of our objectives.

The President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Albina Assis Africano, Minister of Industry of Angola.

Ms. Africano (Angola) (*spoke in French*): It is with great pleasure and satisfaction that we have the honour of addressing this special session of the General Assembly devoted to the review of, and outlook for, social development and to the commitments assumed at Copenhagen. We would like also to congratulate you, Sir, on the outstanding manner in which you are carrying out your duties as President of this session.

The challenges that are now facing social development in Angola — resulting from the commitments assumed by 117 heads of State or Government at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 — are immense, as Angola is struggling to put an end to the instability caused by military conflict in recent years.

Accordingly, our Government, in the context of its present and future governance, is working towards the creation of social conditions conducive to addressing the economic crisis.

Given Angola's current situation, we are endeavouring to put in place various diagnostic measures that will enable us to assess the scope and gravity of the social crisis. We are struggling with serious problems related to the issue of displaced persons, who are just now beginning to believe that it might be possible for them to return home in safety.

These forced internal migratory flows have not made it any easier to take measures to promote the implementation of new economic activities that could generate employment for both rural and urban inhabitants. The major challenge facing our Government at this time is the fight against poverty.

As is well known, this phenomenon has many causes and results each year in a significant shortfall in the domestic product. That is why the elaboration and implementation of strategies to eradicate poverty are among the priority tasks of the Government. This process has already begun.

National teams have been created that are working to gather the information needed to deal with this problem. They are focusing on three main areas: strategies aimed at increasing productivity and employment, strategies to improve the living conditions of the people, and strategies to increase revenues.

It is important to emphasize the programmes that are under way, inter alia, the programme granting micro-credits to rural women, and the one aimed at relaunching the productive sector. I would stress also the recent start-up of the Economic and Social Development Fund, intended for the private sector.

The Angolan Government hopes that following the recent signing of a protocol of understanding with the International Monetary Fund intended to re-establish basic macroeconomic equilibrium, the necessary conditions will be created for a stable economic environment, which is key to micro-economic decisions and for the creation of new jobs.

Large-scale actions have also been undertaken in the area of the training and retraining of employed and unemployed workers in order to provide them with the skills necessary to increase household income. With this objective in mind, a programme of assistance for craftsmen has been set up in cooperation with the employment centres. Thus we have made available "toolkits" for carrying out professional activities.

In its ongoing concern to prioritize the streamlining of human resources through improvements in the areas of education and health, the Government has substantially increased the financial resources allocated to those two sectors this year through current expenditures or through investments in the rehabilitation of social infrastructures, most of which were damaged by the military conflict.

The immediate effect of the war waged by the armed movement in Angola can be seen quite clearly in the number of internally displaced persons in the country. Aware of the harmful social effects and of other types of problems faced by the internally displaced persons, the Government has designed and implemented a national programme for emergency intervention and humanitarian assistance with two closely linked objectives: to provide emergency assistance, on the one hand, and on the other, to carry out activities intended to integrate displaced populations into activities intended to promote their social integration, through the distribution of tools for work. To complement the activities of the national programme for emergency intervention and humanitarian assistance, the Government has undertaken a programme to provide microcredits.

From this rostrum we take this opportunity to thank all those countries that, from near or far, have shown their solidarity and that are providing us with humanitarian aid.

At the end of the last century, when globalization started to become a reality, Copenhagen brought together the developed countries and the developing world. Together we made a commitment to eradicate poverty from our societies. Although we are far from achieving this objective, we are aware that we will achieve it only with cooperation of all kinds and official development assistance. In this new millennium these two factors must be encouraged in our relations. This is why our Government reiterates its support for the principle by which at least 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of the developed countries should be devoted to official development assistance.

In spite of the constraints that Angola is still experiencing, it is firmly committed to guaranteeing all the people access to basic social services. Angola reaffirms its commitment to the 20/20 initiative, while exhorting all countries to commit themselves to achieving this objective.

Finally, we would like to congratulate the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee and all its members on the excellent job done in preparing this special session of the General Assembly. We are convinced that the objectives set by the Assembly will be achieved, so that at a subsequent session entrusted

with examining the progress that has been made on the new commitments many delegations will be able to submit encouraging reports regarding the real elimination of poverty.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Lee Jong-yoon, Vice Minister, Ministry of Health and Welfare, of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Lee (Republic of Korea): The historic commitments made by heads of State or Government in 1995 were solemn pledges. The principles and promises contained in the commitments have provided guidance and constitute strong ethical and moral imperatives for all of us who are endeavouring to realize a society for all.

However, an assessment of the world situation indicates that, while progress has been made in some areas, not all countries have been successful in this task. Significant gaps remain within and among countries. Divergent economic growth is evident, and inequalities still persist in various forms.

No doubt globalization has generated benefits on a wide scale. However, it has also been disruptive for a large category of people in poorer countries with weak and underdeveloped economies, unskilled labour forces and vulnerable groups that lack the capacity and resources to exploit new opportunities.

To ensure that globalization also stimulates socio-economic development, I believe that the benefits of globalization should be better distributed among groups that have been excluded, so that we can be justified in our hope that twenty-first-century globalization will be beneficial for people from all walks of life and for countries at all levels of development.

It is with this in mind that I hope this special session will tailor appropriate strategies and define ends and means to tackle the challenges confronting us.

I take this opportunity to share with the Assembly the experience of the Korean people, an experience that reflects both the pitfalls and the promises of the new global environment. The 1997 financial crisis struck Korea and left many Koreans jobless. But the crisis was also an opportunity to review certain structural flaws in our economic and social systems. More importantly, it has reminded us of the importance of policies for the vulnerable groups in our society, to which we have not paid full attention in the development process.

As measures to overcome these difficulties, the Korean Government has introduced and applied the concept of "productive welfare". For poverty eradication, the Government enacted the National Basic Livelihood Security Act in 1999 and expanded the coverage of the national pension scheme nationwide. The Government has actively implemented policies to create jobs and to provide assistance for small businesses. For social integration, policy measures have been taken to eliminate regional differences and to strengthen social welfare for the underprivileged, such as the aged, the disabled, women, children and the homeless.

In order to enhance efficiency and to establish a collaborative relationship for social development between the public and private sectors, bold structural adjustments and regulatory reforms have been implemented. Furthermore, the proportion of the national budget devoted to national health and welfare has also been continuously increased, even despite limited resources.

Thanks to the Government's efforts and collaboration with the private sector, the Korean economy was able to recover rapidly from recession. We are now more able to build a stronger legal and structural foundation for social safety nets than ever before.

Let me turn to obstacles that are still impeding our efforts to promote continued social development around the world. An increasing number of armed conflicts and humanitarian crises are disrupting even the basic capability of many countries to engage in social development. Diseases such as HIV/AIDS, organized crime, drug abuse and chronic famine should be addressed by implementing more active and coordinated measures. Technical assistance programmes should be enhanced, and official development assistance for developing countries needs to be maintained.

It is of the utmost importance that we confront these challenges collectively in a more coordinated manner. The whole United Nations system should be involved. Developed countries and developing countries should do their parts at the national, regional and international levels. The world trade system and the monetary system also have to take this noble

endeavour for social development into consideration in establishing and implementing their policies.

As stipulated in the 1995 Declaration, the responsibility for social development falls on individual States. Therefore, it should also be pointed out that it is of great importance for individual States to make their social and economic systems stable, efficient and fair. In this sense, the protection and promotion of human rights, good governance and fundamental freedoms are prerequisites for each country's efforts for social development. I hope this session will remind all parties here of the importance of their respective roles in social development, as well as renew and strengthen the cooperative relationship among them.

In March of this year, the Korean Government hosted a policy dialogue at Seoul entitled "Seoul Forum: towards new prosperity and harmony for Asia-Pacific economic cooperation". The Korean Government is confident that the Forum provided an invaluable opportunity for countries to share their particular responses to recent economic crises and to devise ways to continue the work of social development.

At the international level, the Korean Government will continue to increase its official development assistance to developing countries. That assistance has been expanding since 1995. Despite the financial constraints placed upon us by the economic crisis, the Republic of Korea will try to fulfil the commitment we made at the World Summit for Social Development to provide technical training to people from developing countries.

Social development is a multifaceted concept. It calls for a comprehensive and integrated approach to address the full range of overlapping challenges that confront us at this critical juncture. To achieve our goals in the context of globalization and in the midst of many obstacles, all countries and groups must find the courage to reach beyond their own interests and join in an integrated partnership for social development. Korea, for its part, is resolved to elaborate its social development policy and expand cooperative relationships with international partners for the continued implementation of the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Irena Boruta, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Poland.

Mrs. Boruta (Poland) (*spoke in French*): I would first of all like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of this special session of the General Assembly on social development. I join all the previous speakers who expressed their gratitude for the holding of this session on such an extremely important topic.

Allow me now to give some details about the status of Poland's implementation of the provisions of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, as well as to express our thoughts as to the possibility of accelerating social development in our country.

Faced with numerous challenges, such as those of transition, globalization and European integration, we in Poland have begun activities to fight poverty and to promote full and productive employment and social integration. Additionally, between 1999 and 2000, four essential reforms were undertaken: the reform of the social security, health and educational systems, as well as the decentralization of power. We have already seen some success in these reforms.

With regard to the retirement system, its reform was achieved after a difficult period of formulating a concept of reform. That reform is based on the unambiguous concept of increasing individual responsibility in order to ensure income during old age. In anticipation of this, we have also developed a clear concept of social assistance.

Alongside successes there are always setbacks. Unemployment continues to be a problem. Other problems include increasing material inequalities, the exclusion of certain social groups, diminished access to education by young people who are poor or from rural areas, difficulties at times in getting access to health care, and the varying development conditions at the local level.

What needs to be done in Poland to bring about a better response to the expectations of the Copenhagen Summit and of this special session of the General Assembly?

First of all, the cause would be well served if we could arrive together at a single concept of the social aspect in the market economy, redefining the basic functions of the welfare State in the face of transition and globalization. It would be going too far to say that

a single, clearly defined model for social policy is being implemented in our country today. With regard to public and private resources, we are currently developing a mixed welfare-State model that gives public support in the form of financial relief and special subsidies and the like to private institutions providing social services. This approach is aimed at a "third way" that will make it possible to combine the State's overall responsibility to provide the necessary measure of social security with increased individual responsibility. Nevertheless, the process of defining the proportion of public and individual responsibility will be neither easy nor quick.

In the future, it would be better to decide at the outset on the social model to be adopted than to let such a model come together bit by bit. The key is to outline the ways to solve basic social problems.

Secondly, one of the actions that will be undertaken in Poland on behalf of social development is the continued development of a basic, universal concept that will determine how changes will be made in the different areas of social policy. This is particularly noteworthy with regard to putting in place reforms in the areas of education and health services.

Moreover, carrying out the Copenhagen commitments and making efforts for social progress in Poland are being greatly aided by the ongoing development of social dialogue and the development of non-governmental organizations. In connection with the latter, greater importance should be given to the development of civil society — a process that may well benefit from the decentralization of State functions and structures.

Poland affirms it political will to pursue the achievement of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. We share the belief that those documents lay the foundations for social development for the years to come. Solving the problems I have mentioned in Poland will be our contribution to a speedier realization of the concept of social development.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ali Saleh Abdullah, Deputy Minister for Social Affairs of Yemen.

Mr. Abdullah (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by saying that it is a pleasure to congratulate you, Mr. President, on presiding over this special session of the General Assembly. This session, which coincides with the new millennium, has as one of its tasks evaluating the implementation of the 1995 Copenhagen commitments.

It is my pleasure also to convey the greetings of the entire political leadership of Yemen represented by His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdullah Saleh, President of the Republic. Our thanks go to the Swiss Government for all the facilities needed to convene this special session. We acknowledge the important efforts of the Secretary-General, and we thank him for his statement, which set out new ideas for addressing the problem of poverty and overcoming the obstacles to social development.

The Republic of Yemen — which was peacefully united in 1990 through the free will of its people, and which has chosen democracy, comprehensive development, the protection of human rights and a multi-party system of government — has since 1995 been eagerly implementing a programme of financial and administrative reform and the restructuring of the national economy. It has been adopting financial, economic and monetary policies intended to address imbalances and other economic and social problems. It has adopted laws intended to create an appropriate environment for private-sector activities, to promote market mechanisms, to encourage local and foreign investment and to create a climate that will effectively foster civil-society institutions. Those measures have been welcomed by all relevant international institutions.

Yemen has made tangible progress towards economic stability, towards curbing the erosion of the national currency and correcting numerous price, monetary and trade imbalances, and towards achieving a relative improvement in employment opportunities and in reducing unemployment, providing women with additional opportunities to participate actively in social and economic activities and to be included in the various sectors of our society.

The five years since the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development have seen greater focus on the social aspects of development, which are now being given pride of place. The implementation of structural adjustment programmes has led to many social problems: the portion of the population living in poverty has grown to 21 per cent; poverty now affects many new social categories and strata. For that reason,

poverty eradication is a key objective. A variety of social security networks work to alleviate poverty, to create job opportunities, to encourage the creation of small income-generating businesses, to foster popular participation and to promote social integration. The economic and social situation remains difficult, and people continue to suffer. The Government of Yemen is doing all it can to overcome these problems, in cooperation and coordination with donor countries and international financial institutions.

Yemen's commitment is reflected in the fact that it has created a number of social security institutions. Our social development fund, established in 1997 with capital of $80 million, provides job opportunities and helps create small businesses. It has undertaken 1,190 projects over the past three years; 41,930 people have benefited from those projects. In 1996, we set up a social assistance fund with capital of $45 million; it helps 350,000 poor people. Public works projects involving small businesses have led to the creation of 63,000 jobs. Our national programme for the productive family helps poor women acquire new skills and had been of benefit to some 12,000 trainees through 1999. In 1998 we initiated a national employment programme with capital of $42 million; its goals are to reduce poverty, to promote social development on a regional basis and to establish a complementary system for assembling data on poverty and the labour market.

These efforts reflect the Government's determination to keep fighting poverty. We intend next to establish a bank for the poor, to assist the poorest sectors of society, mainly young adults and women. All of this is accompanied by other investment and development projects and social-assistance programmes encompassing new categories: helping disabled, elderly and young people; supporting mothers and children; and increasing school enrolment especially among girls: For this we have allocated $75 million as part of our commitment to meeting development and societal needs.

In the health field, provision of basic services has increased; over the past three years we have been carrying out a programme to vaccine millions of children. The political circles in Yemen are committed to democracy, participation and equality, concepts that have led to the adoption of a number of national strategies, most important among them the national population strategy and those relating to women, mothers and children, to education for girls and to fighting illiteracy. This has created a degree of social contentment and has improved equality of opportunity among the various members of society. Over the past five years, civil-society institutions have played an important role, along with the State, in promoting construction and development. Some 2,500 associations benefit from a variety of privileges.

The democratic process over the past five years culminated in the holding of free and fair parliamentary elections, in which the population participated along with political parties and organizations, among them some 15 parties. In 1999, the first democratic presidential elections were held.

The local authority law has been promulgated for administrative decentralization purposes. My country attaches great importance to the protection of human rights and the eradication of differences and violence, as well as the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and international conventions for the rights of the child.

Finally, the implementation of the Social Summit resolutions has reflected our great commitment to these resolutions and requires our meeting to objectively evaluate the process, either at the local or international level. Proposals must be put forward to improve future implementation, particularly of financing policies and the mobilization of resources, the development of control and follow-up systems, widespread transfer of expertise, new forms of communications and the opening of markets. In addition, we wish to mention the banning of wars, unstable political and security situations, natural disasters that increase poverty and unemployment and all situations that hinder social integration.

The President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Aksoltan Ataeva, Chairperson of the delegation of Turkmenistan.

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): It is a great honour for me, speaking on behalf of Turkmenistan, to address the world community gathered together here today, one united in common anxiety, common hope and a common desire to make our a world a more just, humane and spiritually better place. We can have and do have the right to adhere to different political views, choose different economic models and pursue different ideologies. However, any

individual political idea, even the most noble one, is worth nothing if it does not find room for a common individual's everyday thoughts about daily bread, a roof over his head and the dream of a dignified, quiet and peaceful life. There are billions of people deprived of all this.

The problem that we face is crude and concrete. That problem is: what should be done — and how should it be done — to alleviate the lot of not only individual segments and categories of people taken together but also entire nations and continents where deprivation and suffering have become a way of life? I am convinced that we all understand the serious nature of this problem and that we cannot transfer its burden to the shoulders of future generations.

Turkmenistan belongs to the category of developing nations. Furthermore, it is a neutral State that, by virtue of this status, does not accept any imposition on anyone of ready-made socio-economic and political models of development. Nonetheless, permit me to espouse in general terms Turkmenistan's approach to issues on the agenda of today's meeting, proceeding from the experience of every country that undoubtedly is useful for all of humankind, the opportunities for interaction among States in this respect and the practical application of life-proven schemes.

At the time of its independence Turkmenistan was one of the least developed national entities of the former Soviet Union which experienced to the fullest extent possible the heavy burden of unjust distribution of resources and the effects of the application of the principle of residual financing to social programmes. On top of it all there was a psychological atmosphere of ideological and social uncertainty. Against this background you would understand what it meant for the common people when the State, during the first days of its existence, promulgated a policy of unconditional supremacy of social development and social protection of the entire population. Although we had rather modest financial resources at the time, we channelled them towards ensuring a dignified life for the people, safeguarding them against poverty and deprivation.

The State introduced and has maintained fixed prices for 24 staple products, including bread, flour and dairy products. As regards an additional 500 products and services, mainly foodstuffs, fuel and transport tariffs, these prices can be changed only by means of a decree by the head of State. Turkmenistan maintains a system under which some food products allocated for low-income families are supplied directly to these families virtually free of charge. We maintain regulated prices on State housing, utilities and public transportation. Our citizens do not have to pay anything for gas, electricity, drinking water and salt. We maintain free education and public health services. The State allocates 40 to 50 per cent of its budget to social needs. We have often been criticized for this, with the critics blaming us for a lack of market thinking; but it is thanks to this approach that Turkmenistan, a country that had the most unfavourable start-off conditions on the eve of the reforms, managed to avoid social conflict. It is thanks to this approach that we have managed to ensure social stability, and the people have confidence in the reforms being undertaken.

Emphasis on social support of the family is the cornerstone of our social policy. Turkmenistan has established strong guarantees aimed at protecting motherhood and childhood. Reforms of the system of education and vocational training for future generations are currently being carried out.

To sum up, this is what we have in our country: our citizens, regardless of their property status, know that they have a place to live, that society will help them, that the children will get an education, that they do not have to be concerned about the health of their children, their families or their own health. The State gives the people a feeling of being involved in society's life; it guarantees them their dignity by helping them to develop as all-round individuals.

All this does not imply that Turkmenistan has solved all the problems relating to social development. There are still quite a few such problems, and we are open to discussing them from any angle. We are ready to engage in cooperation with international organizations and specialized bodies of the United Nations. Turkmenistan intends to further strengthen international cooperation that has proven its effectiveness. We are convinced that internationalization of social problems requires internationalization of efforts for their solution. It means that no single country has the right to wall itself off from problems causing concern in the whole world.

When it comes to ensuring sustainable social development in Central Asia, and progress and the well-being of its peoples, regional cooperation becomes especially relevant. Today in Asia we see formation of a stable system of regional interaction as represented by the Economic Cooperation Organization, through which major regional transportation and communication projects are being carried out to bridge the gap between the economies of European and Asian countries and to overcome the technological gap between them and to establish an equitable system of trade and economic relations between North and South.

Turkmenistan is making enormous efforts to deliver energy commodities to international markets. Construction of transregional and transcontinental pipelines is an imperative need of the times and a real and most effective way to overcome the deepening energy crisis and to eliminate disproportions in distribution and consumption of resources, as they are fraught with the danger of social explosions in the States deprived of those resources by their undermining of the foundations of security at national and regional levels. Pipelines mean new work places; they mean light and heat in houses. I am convinced that the contours of Euro-Asian security along the South-North and East-West lines, contours of a future belt of stable nations undergoing sustainable development, will run along the routes of future pipelines. In this sense, the construction of pipelines means not only profitable projects but also projects of social development on a large scale which go far beyond national borders.

Present-day social problems and the global dimensions they have acquired call for mobilization of all of humankind's resources, the political will of world leaders and the harmonization and coordination of action for the solution of these problems. Our task — the task of all members of the international community of nations — is to devise a model of interaction that corresponds to the new realities of international development and the new challenges of the times.

It will be possible to cope with them only by consolidating our efforts and by using modern non-discriminatory and equitable technologies. There is no place today for political blackmail and diktat; aid cannot be made contingent on the infringement of the sovereign rights of nations. It is that approach which Turkmenistan has always advocated and continues to advocate, and it is that approach which corresponds to my country's political philosophy.

The President: I give the floor to Mr. Mordechai Mordechai, Director-General, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Israel.

Mr. Mordechai (Israel) (*spoke in Hebrew; English text provided by the delegation*): This special session has been convened to tackle issues that have troubled mankind since the dawn of history. Thousands of years ago, the Bible was already teaching us that the poor would always be with us in the land and was commanding us to be open-handed with our charity. But the Bible did not regard charity — the readiness of the rich to give to the poor — to be the solution to the problem of poverty and income-distribution. It commanded that all assets should be redistributed once every 50 years, during the jubilee year, and that everything should start over again.

Five years ago, the countries participating in the World Summit for Social Development were less grandiose, and assumed a series of obligations in the area of national and international social development. Those obligations focused on eradicating poverty, finding an appropriate response to disadvantaged populations, expanding employment and searching for a delicate balance between economic and social development. I believe that every country has drawn upon the best of its resources and intellectual capacities to accomplish those tasks and to meet the challenges laid down by the Copenhagen conference.

At the same time, there is no doubt that the short time that has transpired since the conference and the limited resources available have prevented Governments from completely fulfilling the recommendations and goals with respect to social development. The data before us today indicate that we have a long way to go to attain the objectives we set for ourselves. Tens of millions of children around the world suffer from malnutrition, while at the same time the wealth accumulated by a small number of individuals is enormous and is approximately equal to the gross national product of dozens of poor countries. More than a billion people live on less than one dollar a day, in contrast to the three richest people in the world, who are "worth" more than the gross national product of dozens of the poorest countries.

Income distribution is becoming increasingly unequal, not only between countries but also within

them. In Israel as well, I regret to report that in recent years poverty has increased, and social gaps have not been reduced in a significant way. On the one hand, Israel is part of the new economy, with its high-technology companies leading the way in important technological fields. Our gross national product has grown, due mainly to our ability to join the new economy. On the other hand, more Israelis are left behind, and do not enjoy the fruits of growth; too many do not find work.

That is one of the expressions of the change that has taken place in the social development of Israel since the founding of the State. We have changed from a society under siege, which placed emphasis on collectivity and common realization, to a society which places emphasis on individual rights and self-realization.

The State of Israel is proud of its achievements in the area of social development. In the last decade, Israel has absorbed a million immigrants, most from the former Soviet Union and from Ethiopia. Most of those immigrants are now integrated in Israeli society and in its cultural, political and economic life.

In spite of the ongoing security burden, Israel has turned into a modern welfare State, and the readiness of its citizens to support that welfare State has not diminished. To the contrary, our progress in many areas continues. For almost a decade, Israel has been spending more on social services than on security. Social legislation continues and expands its protection of vulnerable populations such as women, mothers, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Life expectancy in Israel is one of the highest in the world, with every Israeli being covered by the health insurance law, which provides a large basket of health services. Educational levels have steadily risen. More and more Israelis have access to higher education as well as to special educational services.

Nevertheless, we know that the real solution to the increase in poverty and unemployment is not the development of more social services and more social legislation. Rather, it is investment in education for better integration in the workplace. As early as 900 years ago, Maimonides wrote that the highest level of charity is to give people a vocation by which they can support themselves with independence and dignity.

The preferred model is not that of rich people maintaining poor people through their contributions, but that of a society based on decent work relations, where most people realize their full potential and support their families through their work. With that in mind, social institutions are responsible for developing responsive social arrangements and effective methods for the integration of needy and disabled groups in the workplace. We wish to remove hundreds of thousands of Israelis from the cycle of poverty not by making payments to them but by a reasonable minimum wage that would prevent more Israelis from falling below the poverty line. We do not seek to come to terms with rules of the economic game that endanger social solidarity, but to find solutions that combine growth and economic policy with employment and social goals, together with integration and social development.

Israel is a country with a relatively small internal market. The process of globalization is having a major effect, widening socio-economic gaps and limiting opportunities for weaker economic groups. Therefore, we ask to be full partners in the international community's efforts to find ways to integrate economic development and growth with social development, full employment and the eradication of poverty and illiteracy.

We believe that the international community and its major institutions must find ways to give expression to the interdependence of economic and social policies and to assist countries in examining these issues as a whole. We believe that tools and measures must be developed to examine the social ramifications of economic initiatives, and to evaluate products, output and productivity in social terms.

Israel would like to be a pioneer in the development of modes and methods of regional cooperation in the areas which are at the core of the deliberations of this special session. We aspire to true cooperation with Arab countries and with others in our region, for the benefit of the social development of all peoples of the region. All have wasted too much energy and resources in areas that compromise social development, forestall the reduction of poverty, limit the advancement of education, and postpone the eradication of illiteracy.

The time has come to work together to achieve full employment, economic growth and social

development for all peoples of the region. Israel has proved that it is ready to take meaningful steps in order to advance this goal.

Peace will bring an end to the hostility between peoples only if we are able to establish a network of neighbourly relations which promotes economic prosperity and social development.

The international community can play a major role in the economic and social development of this region.

The President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Intisar Al-Wazir, Minister for Social Affairs of the Palestinian Authority.

Mrs. Al-Wazir (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of Palestine, to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of this special session. I should like also to thank the Swiss authorities for hosting this session.

This session is being held as humanity is entering the third millennium under radical international changes — politically and economically. The globalization process has been intensified due to the revolution in communications, technology, transportation and information. Our world has become a small global village with common concerns and common future.

Today, the world is confronted with great strategic and existential difficulties and problems. A collective effort is required on the part of the international community to find the appropriate solutions. These problems include the existence of weapons of mass destruction worldwide, which threatens the very survival of humanity; an increase in ethnic, religious and regional armed conflicts; the arms race; the unsustainable and irrational use of natural resources; and environmental pollution, all of which pose a threat to human life, the ecological balance and the interests of future generations. They also result in inequities in international economic relations and in a widening gap between the rich developed countries of the north and the poor developing countries of the south, where 80 per cent of the world's poorest live. Debt problems are exhausting an important part of the resources of poor countries, thereby seriously hampering their development. In addition, there are the problems of desertification, hunger, HIV/AIDS and other epidemics.

The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, addressed very important issues essential to the lives of all peoples, at the forefront of which are the eradication of poverty, the elimination of unemployment and the promotion of social integration. The developments that have taken place since the Summit, including the Seattle events, indicate that the situation worldwide has not improved as had been envisaged at that Summit. The Copenhagen Programme of Action has not been fully implemented. Poverty has increased fivefold since then, as stated by the United Nations Secretary-General. Unemployment is on the rise, and social integration has been severely elusive in many countries due to ethnic, religious or national intolerance, marginalization and the weakening, or absence, of democracy.

The Palestinian people are still struggling for their right to self-determination; the establishment of their independent democratic Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital; and a just solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which guarantees their right to return to their homes and compensation for the material and moral losses they have suffered over the past 50 years.

The Palestinian leadership has consistently reaffirmed that peace is a strategic choice. In this regard, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) signed a five-year interim accord with the Israeli Government, which ended a year ago without the full implementation by successive Israeli Governments of what has been agreed upon, under international supervision.

At the same time, the Israeli occupiers are continuing their policies and practices of land confiscation, building and expansion of settlements, building of bypass roads, uprooting of trees, demolition of houses, violation of human rights, disassociation of Palestinian cities and villages, Judaization and isolation of Jerusalem, confiscation of identification papers of Palestinian inhabitants in Jerusalem, imprisonment of Palestinians, and response to Palestinian protests with live ammunition, as well as humiliation of Palestinian citizens.

Furthermore, Israel still controls Palestinian natural resources, including 80 per cent of the Palestinian water supply. It is deepening the

dependence of the Palestinian economy on the Israeli economy in all aspects, such as production, consumption, export, import and the labour market.

While Israel refuses to implement the interim agreement, signed with the PLO, particularly with respect to the withdrawal from Palestinian territory and the establishment of safe passages between the West Bank and Gaza, it continues to manoeuvre and delay negotiations on permanent solutions to the problems of refugees, Jerusalem, settlements, boundaries, sovereignty and water. It refuses to go back to the 4 June 1967 boundaries, prevents the return of Palestinian refugees and refuses to discuss the issue of Jerusalem. It seeks the annexation of settlements and rejects the creation of an Arab-Palestinian territorial continuum, in total violation of the resolutions of international legitimacy, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and General Assembly resolution 194 (III). International pressure must be brought to bear at the official and grass-roots level to force Israel to comply with international resolutions in order to reach a balanced, comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli and Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Palestinian people live in a politically and economically complex situation, which in turn creates a negative social environment. More than 25 per cent of the Palestinian people live below the poverty line. Unemployment is around 12 per cent. There are 120,000 Palestinian workers who work in the Israeli market; they lose their jobs in case of closures. Economic growth indicators are weak due to the lack of investments, which in turn is due to the absence of security and the stalemate in the peace process. It is very difficult to achieve genuine social development while under occupation, with total dependence on the Israeli economy, without freedom of movement for goods and people within Palestine and with the outside world. All of these factors greatly affect our capacities in implementing economic and social policies for development.

In spite of this difficult and negative situation, the Palestinian National Authority has enacted legislation in the political, economic and social fields. There are 30 laws that play an important role in the creation of a legal environment for the social, economic and political development of the Palestinian society, and a number of new bills are pending ratification. Legislative and presidential elections were also held under international supervision. The relationship between the Palestinian Authority and non-governmental organizations is being regulated. A Ministerial Committee has been established to promote good governance. In order to achieve transparency and accountability, the Palestinian Authority is laying the foundation of political pluralism and promoting democracy and freedom of expression. It has also developed a national employment strategy in Palestine to alleviate and gradually eliminate unemployment and to promote full employment. However, Israeli policies remain an obstacle to achieving genuine development in the Palestinian economy.

The Palestinian Authority is also working to enhance national policies to combat poverty by moving from relief to development. It provides assistance to 30 per cent of poor families and gives special attention to the handicapped, newly released prisoners and the elderly. The Palestinian Authority also strives to achieve equality between men and women through legislation that takes the gender issue into consideration in development planning. Special attention is being given to the reconstruction process in Palestine, through the rebuilding of the infrastructure destroyed by the Israeli occupation. At the same time, this process is aimed at strengthening the social fabric by paying special attention to education, health, sanitation, clean water and the environment.

With its continued occupation of Palestinian land, Israel impedes social integration, especially as its policies are aimed at isolating Palestinian communities from one another. The Palestinian National Authority is striving to integrate returnees into Palestine and will devote great efforts to integrating more returnees in the future.

Our main conclusion is that there can be no real development under occupation. The basic condition for achieving real social development in Palestine is the establishment of the Palestinian independent democratic State with Jerusalem as its capital, the return of all refugees and the implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions. This requires a concrete international mechanism to implement those resolutions and to support the Palestinian people in their struggle to realize their national rights, so that peace, security, freedom, justice, equality, economic prosperity and social development can prevail for the Palestinian people, for all the peoples of the region and throughout the world.

We wish this special session on social development the greatest success.

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Hussain (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country has asked to take the floor in exercise of its right of reply to respond to what the representative of Kuwait said regarding missing persons. We would like to clarify the following points.

Iraq has complied with the relevant international resolutions regarding missing persons. Iraq turned over all Kuwaiti prisoners of war and other prisoners of war immediately after the hostilities ended. Iraq was cooperating with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Tripartite Commission on missing persons until United States and British authorities launched a massive attack on Iraq in December 1998. The United Kingdom and the United States are members of the Tripartite Commission. After that attack it became impossible for the Commission to continue its work, as those two countries had no missing persons to be looked for. Their continuing membership in the Commission highly politicizes its activities; the Commission was used only for political purposes and to maintain the economic embargo on Iraq.

Iraq has consistently affirmed that it is continuing to look for its own missing persons — 1,150 Iraqis — and to trace Kuwaiti missing persons in cooperation with the ICRC, as well as with any other interested parties. This is a humanitarian issue, and Iraq does not have any interest whatsoever in putting off a final resolution of this problem. On the contrary, Iraq also has missing persons, and we, too, would like to know what happened to them.

Mr. Mammadov (Azerbaijan): Regrettably, the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan is obliged to take the floor after the biased and distorted statement made by the representative of Armenia. It is a well-known fact that for more than 10 years Azerbaijan has been suffering as a result of aggression by neighbouring Armenia. Twenty per cent of our territory has been occupied as a result of this aggression. Armenia is responsible for the crimes against humanity that have been perpetrated by its armed forces during this aggression. Tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis, including women, children and the elderly, have been killed, maimed or wounded. More than 1 million Azerbaijanis — or one in every eight residents — have been forced to live in unbearable conditions in refugee camps, railroad cars and other temporary shelters. Under these circumstances, Azerbaijan is making the utmost efforts to mitigate the negative impact of the aggression and to meet the minimum social-service requirements of this sector of the population.

Despite the suffering and hardship caused by the aggression, the Government of Azerbaijan is determined to resolve the conflict by peaceful means. Therefore, the Armenian statement evokes only a smile and demonstrates once again that Armenia is trying to avoid responsibility for acts it has perpetrated.

Mr. Peleg (Israel): I regret and I am disappointed that the Palestinian representative used this General Assembly special session, which is dealing with very important issues and very important challenges to the international community, to make a political statement, which has no place here. Most of that speech was irrelevant to the issues that all of us have been discussing here these past few days.

I do not intend to refer to the facts mentioned by the Palestinian representative. Many of them are not true, and many of them are taken out of context. But let me say just this: the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will not be solved here. It will not be solved at the United Nations in New York. It will be solved — and I trust it will be solved soon — in negotiations, direct negotiations, between Palestinians and Israelis, between my Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Chairman Yasser Arafat. In these negotiations, it is clear, both sides will have to take substantial and painful decisions.

The only way to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli issues is through direct negotiations regarding employment, works, health and many other issues. I would encourage my Palestinian partner in this march for peace to work bilaterally, to work with us. I am sure, and I trust, that we will agree on a settlement of our conflict that will be satisfactory to both Palestinians and Israelis and will mark a further step in the peace process in the Middle East and thus in trying

to ensure the peace, prosperity and welfare of our region.

Mr. Al-Askar (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to comment on what was said by the representative of Iraq.

The question of Kuwaiti missing persons and detainees in Iraq is not new. It goes back 10 years, to 2 August 1990, when the Iraqi regime invaded Kuwait in an act of aggression without precedent since the Second World War. We are talking here about a human tragedy for more than 600 Kuwaiti prisoners of war and other persons held in Iraq, about whom no one has had any information since the liberation of my country in February 1991.

What the representative of Iraq said was just pretence. We are not talking here about weapons of mass destruction being used against neighbours or people. We are talking about human beings, innocent people kidnapped from streets, houses and mosques during the occupation of Kuwait. If Iraq were seriously trying to solve this purely humanitarian problem, it would not have boycotted the Tripartite Commission or the Technical Subcommittee under the coordination of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), whose last meeting was held last week in Geneva.

Denials that there are missing Kuwaitis in Iraq are not to be believed. We have learned from our experience with the regime in question that we cannot trust it or believe its claims. It has always tried to shrug off responsibility for its commitments, although it is a signatory to the United Nations Charter and other international instruments and has accepted international humanitarian law and Security Council resolutions 686 (1991) and 687 (1991). Iraq should be committed to implementing those resolutions and to respecting the will of the international community, as reflected in the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly calling on it to return all Kuwaiti and other citizens to their homes. It should return all persons detained during the occupation of Kuwait.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2000/347) submitted to the Security Council in accordance with paragraph 14 of resolution 1284 (1999) requests Iraq to immediately free, under the supervision of the ICRC, all Kuwaiti and other citizens, to return the bodies of all those who died, and to cooperate fully with the ICRC in this regard. However, this has not been done.

From this forum we call on the international community to continue applying pressure on Iraq to release Kuwaiti and other prisoners of war, as well as to release information as to their fate. This should be a moral and humanitarian commitment, not only a political one.

Mr. Ghadiyeh (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to confirm that the statement by Palestine was fully consistent with the daily suffering of the Palestinian people during their long history. The Palestinian people have lived under the oppressive occupation of Israel for over one third of a century. The fact of the matter is that what was said in that statement constitutes only a small part of the reality prevailing in our country, in which Israel carries out all types of political, economic and military oppression against our people.

I wish to add that the General Assembly and all other international institutions have a very important and substantial role to play in solving this problem between us and the Israelis, in the context of bilateral and multilateral negotiations under the auspices of the international community. The agreements made between us and Israel were not reached just bilaterally, but under international auspices.

The problem that has frozen things is the militant Israeli mentality in connection with the occupation. Israel does not want to implement resolutions of international legitimacy emanating from international institutions.

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak a second time in exercise of the right of reply. Interventions are limited to five minutes.

Mr. Al-Humaimidi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Iraq's statement will be very brief. We would like to clarify some basic realities concerning the question of missing persons.

First of all, my delegation agrees with what was said by the representative of Kuwait: that this issue is a humanitarian one. But some aspects of it differ in some respects. The Kuwaiti regime continues to politicize this subject for many reasons, but primarily to continue to perpetrate the embargo and siege on Iraq.

As is well known, missing persons are the tragic result of all wars. We in Iraq have double the number of missing persons that the regime of Kuwait alleges it

has. We are anxious to deal with this problem, in the right context and as quickly as possible.

Yes, we have stopped dealing with the Tripartite Commission. But why did we stop? Because there are parties in that Commission that perpetrated military aggression against Iraq for four days, resulting in 500 civilians dead, over 1,000 persons injured and with the concomitant loss of property and destruction of infrastructure. Is it then logical to expect us to meet again with the countries that perpetrated that aggression against us, and that do not even have missing persons, to solve the problem of missing persons? No, I do not believe so.

I would like to say on behalf of the Government of Iraq that we are now ready to enter into negotiations of any kind, with any relevant committee or within the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) committee, to deal with this humanitarian problem. We would wish to sit down with countries that have or claim to have missing persons; but the inclusion of countries with no missing persons, which are trying to prolong the embargo and to exploit the situation for political reasons, impinges upon the sovereignty of Iraq and makes this a political problem.

Mr. Peleg (Israel): I am sure that the Palestinian representative knows that by now 99 per cent of the Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza live under the control of the Palestinian Authority. And surely, the social issues and concerns of those Palestinians should be dealt with by her ministry in the Palestinian Authority. I think, frankly, that the time has come for the Palestinian Authority to look inward instead of complaining all the time to the international community and trying to initiate resolutions condemning Israel, and to ask themselves how things are going within the Palestinian Authority. What about good governance? What about transparency? What about human rights?

Let me conclude by re-emphasizing and reiterating that Israel is ready to cooperate with the Palestinian Authority; Israel is ready to assist the Palestinian Authority in every possible field, because we believe that there is an interrelationship among economic prosperity, social prosperity and political stability. We are interested in all three.

Mr. Al-Askar (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): Once again, unfortunately, we have heard the representative of the Iraqi regime make false allegations. He said that he was different. True, we are not like the Iraqi regime in the way we deal with countries or individuals. He said he had cooperated with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), but that is untrue, as has been noted in all relevant documents. He said that it is we who are politicizing this issue; but he has now said that he would not participate in the work of the tripartite committee so long as the United States and the United Kingdom were participating in it. He said that there are twice as many Iraqi prisoners of war as Kuwaiti prisoners of war. This is a humanitarian question, not a question of numbers, whether dozens, hundreds, thousands or millions. The families of these missing persons are waiting for their sons, their fathers, their loved ones.

He also said that all conflicts result in issues of missing persons. But who started this war? That is the question that should be asked. Who invaded Kuwait? Who was responsible for such treatment of civilians and non-civilians during the war? Is Iraq not a party to the fourth Geneva Convention, relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War? Ought not Iraq to be committed to implementing conventions on the treatment of civilians in time of war or under occupation, and on the return of prisoners of war at the end of hostilities?

I shall not speak of Iraq's terrible human rights record, which is well documented and well known. Representatives know perfectly well what that record is like. During its seven-month occupation of my country, the Iraqi regime treated my people in the worst possible way. That regime continues in the same way; it has not changed at all.

All we ask is that Iraq be forced to comply fully with all resolutions of the Security Council. We think that this would solve many of the problems facing us.

Mr. Ghaddya (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of Israel knows that 99 per cent of the Palestinian people are in fact under the civilian control of Israel, not of the Palestinian National Authority: the Israeli military could attack the homes of more than 70 per cent of Palestinians. He knows that, as a Palestinian, I need a permit to go from Gaza to the West Bank, and that I am not allowed to visit Jerusalem at all. If I wish to go abroad, I must seek a permit from Israel or remain in Israel.

The representative of Israel knows very well that thousands of prisoners remain in Israeli jails. He knows

that military occupation should have ended in 90 per cent of Palestinian territory. But the reality is that the military has withdrawn from only 20 per cent of that territory. He knows that the safe passage to the north is not open, and he knows that there is no freedom of movement for merchandise or for imports and exports outside Israel.

How can the Ministry for Social Affairs solve the problems of Palestinians in such a complex economic, political and security situation? We do not need the representative of Israel to teach us any lessons about democracy and transparency; we know that Israel faces such problems itself. If Israel is so proud of being democratic, how can it be so racist towards other peoples?

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.

United Nations A/S-24/PV.7

General Assembly
Twenty-fourth special session

Official Records

7th meeting
Thursday, 29 June 2000, 10 a.m.
Geneva

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Proposals for further initiatives for social development

(a) Review and appraisal of progress since the World Summit for Social Development

(b) Proposals for further initiatives for the full implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development

The President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Tessa Jowell, Minister for Employment of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Jowell (United Kingdom): This special session on Copenhagen+5 follows closely on the recent Beijing+5 session, held in New York. It is right that the world should now take stock of progress since the two summits held five years ago. The Beijing+5 session was a great success and provided a new sense of direction. This session on social development must and, I am sure, will do the same.

Before the World Summit for Social Development five years ago, the role of social policy tended to be seen in isolation from the role of economic policy. Its potential contribution to economic growth was often underestimated. At Copenhagen, the international community agreed for the first time that economic and social policies must be mutually reinforcing. Sustainable long-term growth needs to be underpinned by effective social policies. Investment in effective social policies is economically productive.

We are here today to build on the achievements of that first world social summit. Our purpose is to assess the progress which we have made in meeting the 10 commitments agreed at Copenhagen. But we must also consider whether we need to set ourselves new objectives in the light of the changes which have taken place in the world over the past five years.

The 10 commitments provided a clear framework for countries to develop policies to promote social justice and to combat poverty. Earlier this year we gave an account to the United Nations of what we had achieved in our respective countries over the past five years. An analysis of our reports has shown that there is much still to be done. There are still 1.2 billion people in the world with a life expectancy of less than 50 years, as well as high levels of child and maternal mortality, child labour, illiteracy, ill health, suffering and squalor. There is still much to be done.

A lot has changed since 1995. Since Copenhagen, the process of globalization has gathered pace. It has been driven by new information technologies and the rapid movement of capital around the world. It is difficult to overestimate the consequences of this for all our societies. The financial crisis of 1997 and its aftermath demonstrated the vulnerability of developing economies to sudden flights of capital. Financial volatility has clearly increased as a result of

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globalization and advances in technology. These developments have highlighted the important role of social policy in ensuring stability through times of crisis.

There is now both a need and an opportunity for the international community to define the principles which should underpin the social policies of all our countries. One of the most useful things the Assembly can do at this session is to build on the Copenhagen commitments, and to agree on the need for an operational framework which individual countries can then apply. National ownership is crucial for the development of any effective social policy. It is essential to take full account of regional and national differences. For that reason, the United Nations is uniquely well placed to lead an exploration of the key aspects of social policy which underpin economic development.

But there is no question of trying to impose a blueprint on all countries. The aim must be to enable individual countries to set achievable standards for themselves and to develop policies that will result in balanced and sustainable development.

The challenge for our generation is to ensure that the new wealth and opportunities created by globalization are used to reduce global inequality. We must ensure that the one in five who still live on less than a dollar a day have the chance to lift themselves out of poverty.

That is the challenge at both national and international level. In the United Kingdom, child poverty increased threefold over the last 20 years, and we are now committed to eradicating child poverty within the next 20 years and halving it within the next 10 years. Thousands of children in the United Kingdom have been leaving school without even basic skills: 17 per cent of 16-to-25-year-olds with difficulty in reading and writing; 22 per cent with difficulties in numeracy. Tackling these problems is at the heart of our drive to raise standards in our schools and to equip all our young people for work.

The recent report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on child poverty said that children are kept in poverty not by a padlock to which there is a single key but by a combination lock that requires an alignment of factors if it is to be released. That is a very important message: no single key, but a combination lock. There is no single cause, no single answer to the problems of poverty and social exclusion.

That is the message of the Copenhagen commitments. They underline the need for social policy to be comprehensive and coherent if it is to be effective. The 10 Copenhagen commitments are the levers in UNICEF's combination lock. We must unlock the potential for growth and greater social justice across our societies.

In the United Kingdom we are trying to tackle the problems of poverty and social exclusion through integrated Government approaches that will deliver better education, improved public health, better housing and, most of all, young people who have the skills and qualifications to get and to keep jobs in the new knowledge-based economy.

Two weeks ago, when I addressed the International Labour Conference here, I announced the ratification by the United Kingdom of Convention 138, on child labour. The United Kingdom has now ratified all the core labour conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO). I also said that in a modern economy the key goal is to get as many people as possible into active employment, to increase the size of the labour force. That means removing obstacles to the employment of women, people from ethnic minorities, young people, older workers and people with disabilities.

That is what we need to do at the national level and that is what we need to do at the international level. The aim should be to secure a worldwide increase in the number of people in work. That is why I warmly welcome the Assembly's recognition of the need for a coherent and coordinated international strategy on employment and support for the convening of a world employment forum by the ILO in 2001.

What the world expects from this session is not just a collection of proposals but a programme of action building a platform for reform for the new century, underpinned by principles of economic and social justice. These reflect our best values and will deliver stability and growth for our societies. Let us work together to meet that challenge, turning our big aspirations into practical action.

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Steve Maharey, Minister of Social Services and Employment of New Zealand.

Mr. Maharey (New Zealand): I am delighted to represent the New Zealand Government in this important forum. The themes of eradicating poverty, promoting employment and fostering social integration and development strike a strong chord with the people of New Zealand.

We are a small nation, but one that prides itself on its creativity, its compassion and its leadership. We have a long history of progressive social policy stretching back over a century. More recently, New Zealand has developed a reputation as an equally enthusiastic economic reformer. We now enjoy strong economic growth. We are looking forward to an average 3 per cent per annum over the next three years, and unemployment is predicted to fall to about 5 per cent by March 2002.

But we have not found the process of reform or the pressures of globalization to be painless. Changes in the labour market have impacted on some of our people's ability to participate. Those with few educational qualifications, those in unskilled occupations and those in industries that used to be subject to trade tariff protection have experienced dislocation from the work force or lowered incomes. The indigenous Maori population and New Zealanders of Pacific Island origin have been disproportionately affected and, in some regions of the country, people have fared worse than others.

It is in this context of strong economic growth, but growing disquiet about disparities, that the newly elected social democratic Government, which I represent today, has set itself six goals which closely reflect the aims of the Summit. These goals are to develop an innovative economy which creates jobs and provides opportunities for all New Zealanders; foster education and skills development for all of our people; close social and economic gaps in our society; restore trust in Government and promote strong public and social services; treasure and nurture our environment; and celebrate our identity as a people.

A thriving and sustainable economy is central to our vision of a vibrant social democracy, but it must be an economy in which every New Zealander has the opportunity to participate. This means that, as a Government, we will continue to pursue sound economic management and policies to encourage and support our business sector. We will also pursue active social policies to lift the capability of our people to take up those opportunities and to ensure that all areas of our country benefit.

Investment in human capability is the foundation of our strategy to close the gaps in New Zealand society. This means investment in education through traditional means and through such means as public housing and health services. It means allowing Maori and Pacific Island people to design services for themselves so that they can define services that will improve their lives. It means improving the pathway from school to work.

Like many countries, we have an ageing population. We see that 80 per cent of our people who will be in the workforce in 10 years time are already there. We are therefore basing our future on life-long learning. Opportunities for education and training are extremely important to us if we are to develop peoples' capabilities throughout their lives. Education and training will also, of course, expand our economy.

Three out of four of our long-term unemployed are Maori or Pacific Island people. That is an overrepresentation we do not want to continue. We have therefore placed a great deal of emphasis on such things as literacy and numeracy skills to ensure that people are not excluded. The world of work must be fair. We are passing new labour legislation that will allow us to comply with all International Labour Organization standards and to ensure fairness in the workplace in New Zealand.

Greater social inclusion will not come just from better education services and fairer employment relationships. We also want a close partnership with communities. Communities know best how to define their future, so, in particular, we are helping communities, particularly Maori and Pacific Island communities, to lift their own capability to deliver economic and social programmes. This capacity-building is an investment in the future, helping communities to define their own problems and assisting them to provide solutions for their own people.

Social development is integral also to New Zealand's overseas aid programme. Official development assistance continues to be primarily focused on the Pacific Island States and on the developing countries of East and South-East Asia. The Government intends to ensure that it develops its aid towards the point of having 0.7 per cent of its overall

gross domestic product dedicated to assistance in foreign aid, particularly in education and in health.

In conclusion, as a small egalitarian society, we have shown social policy leadership in the past and we are determined to do so again in the future. The spirit of cooperation and commitment at this special session reflects the importance New Zealand and other nations attach to its goals. There is much in the Declaration and Programme of Action for us to affirm and build on, and New Zealand will surely play its part.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sadoun Humadi, President of the National Council of Iraq.

Mr. Humadi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of the Iraqi delegation, and to thank the Swiss Government for having kindly hosted this session.

Five years have elapsed since the holding of the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995. The choice of themes for the Summit attested to the recognition by the international community of the importance of making human beings the focus of development efforts. Today, however, we find that problems are more intense throughout the world than they were in 1995. While the developed countries have enjoyed sustained growth, most States of the South have faced economic crises as a result of increased poverty, inequality of income distribution and growing foreign debt. Moreover, economic sanctions have undermined the capacity for growth of many developing countries and increased the number of people living in poverty. That is why we support the proposal of the President of Tunisia for the establishment of a universal fund for solidarity.

Since the Copenhagen Summit in 1995, the Government of Iraq has striven to adopt a variety of measures in accordance with the Copenhagen Programme of Action in order to solve the problem of poverty. It has also sought to introduce reforms in the fields of health and education, to provide job opportunities and to implement many programmes in the field of social care. However, these efforts have been hindered by the unjust economic sanctions that have been imposed on our country since 1990, while the United States and the United Kingdom pursue their military aggression against us.

The past 10 years have seen an acute deterioration of the economic, social, cultural and health conditions of the Iraqi people. The Iraqi gross national product has fallen by two thirds. The World Food Programme has indicated that the cost of essential goods has increased 850-fold, dragging a large percentage of the Iraqi people below the poverty line. All health services have suffered serious deterioration. According to the report of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the monthly mortality rate for children under the age of five years has increased to about 7,000. Moreover, one fourth of children under age five suffer from chronic malnutrition. Before the sanctions Iraq had been able to eliminate illiteracy completely. But sanctions have reduced enrolment rates at all educational levels. The UNICEF report indicates that an entire generation of Iraqis has no link whatsoever with the outside world.

Decisions to place third world countries under sanctions have recently increased, despite the fact that such measures often result in heavy losses of civilian lives and property. No attempt is made to ensure that the Security Council complies with the legal rules contained in the Charter of the United Nations relating to the Council's actions. The Council has imposed comprehensive sanctions against Iraq for almost 10 years now, despite the fact that Iraq has complied with its relevant obligations. The Council should use its powers pursuant to the principles enshrined in the Charter, particularly with regard to Article 25. The authority entrusted to the Council under Article 24 is also subject to the Charter's legal rules on human rights and humanitarian standards. It is unacceptable for States harmed by such Council conduct to remain without legal recourse to, for instance, the International Court of Justice, which could pass judgement on the compliance of Council resolutions with the Charter and international law.

The lifting of the unjust embargo on the people of Iraq is a humanitarian responsibility shared by all, including those present at this special session. We urge those present here to renounce the use of the weapon of economic embargo. That weapon not only contradicts the foundations upon which this meeting is being held, but it also goes completely against the fundamental rules and principles of human rights. The Charter of the United Nations and international law prohibit genocide. If what is happening in Iraq is not genocide, then what is?

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Burchell Whiteman, Minister of Education and Culture of Jamaica.

Mr. Whiteman (Jamaica): May I join my fellow delegates in expressing thanks to our hosts — the President, Government and people of Switzerland — for the hospitality they have extended to us; and to you, Mr. President, for your efforts and efficient conduct of the proceedings of this session. May I ask you to convey that to all the members of your team.

The World Summit for Social Development was a historic moment that attracted one of the largest gatherings of world leaders. Today, as we meet to assess the progress made since Copenhagen, that momentum has not been lost but, as many speakers have said, gaps remain to be closed by both developed and developing countries.

In Jamaica we have put in place several initiatives aimed at fulfilling the commitments made at the Social Summit. The country's social agenda embraces in particular three core themes of the Copenhagen Summit: poverty eradication, the expansion of productive employment and social integration. In this regard, it incorporates key elements such as the promotion of macroeconomic stability, human resources development, gender equality and the targeting of vulnerable groups such as children, youth, the elderly poor, disadvantaged women and persons with disabilities.

The Government has consistently reaffirmed its commitment to creating an economic, political, social, cultural and, most importantly, legal environment that will enable the nation to attain the desired level of social development. To this end an integrated system of social policy planning has been established through the Human Resources Development Council, which is a subcommittee of the cabinet. A series of reforms to the Constitution and the political system, including local government reform, has been initiated to foster greater democratization of the society. A national poverty eradication policy and programme was approved by Parliament, predicated on the commitment to promote social and economic development, to reduce the number of persons below the poverty line in targeted communities by 50 per cent over three years, and to eradicate absolute poverty in the long term.

The community has been made the central focus of efforts towards poverty eradication. The Jamaica Social Investment Fund, for instance, was created as a vehicle for community infrastructure improvement in response to a community's identified priority needs and with its involvement in the project from concept stage to completion. The National Social Development Commission works with those communities to establish capacity for implementation.

Strategic policies and programmes aimed at expanding employment and reducing unemployment for both men and women have been instituted. These include, very importantly, institutional support for the small and micro-enterprises sector, in the light of the growth in those sectors. A programme of reform and social investment — mainly in education, training and health services — has been implemented.

As a result of these efforts, notable progress has been made in the country's social development agenda, as can be seen, for example, in the reduction of poverty from nearly 30 per cent to under 20 per cent of the population over the last five years. It is of immense importance, therefore, that economic and social policies be integrated and be mutually reinforcing.

We take the view that even where resources are scarce and economic reforms take on added urgency, social goals cannot be subordinated to the dominant agenda for growth and market development. The State still has a central role to play, particularly in meeting the needs of the poor and other excluded and marginalized groups in society. Ensuring universal and equitable access to quality education and other basic social services remains one of its fundamental responsibilities and is of paramount importance to the attainment of social development.

Dakar and the meeting last month of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean both reaffirmed the central importance of education and training to higher productivity, greater social efficiency, increased well-being and greater cultural and political participation. It is against this background that our educational reforms have reached from primary through secondary education and, indeed, even to the tertiary level. At that level we have ensured that a State-funded student loan programme facilitates participation by the poorest quintile of the population, but we are conscious of the fact that their level of participation must increase.

Agenda item 8, with which we are now dealing, asks us for proposals for further initiatives for social

development. My delegation supports six proposals which, we believe, reflect the thinking within our region of Latin America and the Caribbean and which are also born out of our national experience.

First, as we seek not to renegotiate Copenhagen, but to advance it, can we also seek to harmonize both the language and the strategies which have emerged out of the various summits and special conferences of the United Nations on women and gender, education for all and social development? Can we consolidate in a meaningful way the principles and major strategies which inform Beijing, Dakar, Copenhagen and Geneva? And can we therefore produce a version that will find some resonance with all people in their communities, in their sectors, in their age groups and in their ethnic and geographic space?

Secondly, we also urge developing countries to support each other in more overt and direct ways by sharing best practices, particularly in the area of integrated social development. There are success stories in regions like ours that demonstrate the efficacy of empowering communities and community leadership to pursue the social development agenda. There is also a clear need to recognize and strengthen the interface between good governance and effective community participation, and between social development and economic planning at the level of the community. We in the Caribbean are beginning to learn from each other and to share experiences.

Thirdly, we support the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative as a positive step forward. We also applaud those developed countries that have, during this conference, called for the honouring of the 0.7 per cent contribution to official development assistance.

Fourthly, at the same time, there needs to be improved modalities in the conduct of business between the multilateral lending agencies and the bilateral donors, on the one hand, and the borrowing or beneficiary countries, on the other. We believe that there is room for more sensitivity and respect to be shown to developing countries in the conditions and processes affecting the provision of funding. Clearly, there needs to be integrity of projects and reasonable guarantees of sustainability, but, equally, it should be understood that a borrower or a beneficiary is fully cognizant of what is best for the country, in particular taking into account its cultural context and historical experiences.

Fifthly, all our countries need to review the assumptions which we make about economic growth, especially when economic growth is often so manifestly not accompanied by social development. We need to give special attention to harmonizing growth strategies with the basic human need for work, for wholesome employment, which is an important component of human and social development. Efficiency, increased productivity, competition in the market, more choices for the consumer, better prices: these are all desirable. However, when they come at the cost of jobs in the developing world, with almost full employment in the industrial societies, then all our brave words mean nothing if we do not look for new strategies to reverse that trend.

Finally, if it is true that the knowledge, information and technology revolution represents the future and that we are moving towards a world where new products and processes will demand and create more employment, then we must repeat what my Prime Minister emphasized at the G-15 summit in Cairo. There must be a deliberate strategy to put the new technologies at the service of the vulnerable and those who now do not have access, whether they be in the developing world or in pockets of deprivation within the developed and more affluent countries. Perhaps if we begin there, we stand a chance of seeing the world as Mr. Bertrand Piccard and Mr. Brian Jones did from their balloon circling the planet — as one human race in all its splendid variety, but with shared hopes, similar expectations and common potential.

This special session has identified the global changes since Copenhagen. We have been looking together at ways of demonstrating greater resolve and developing new strategies for action — and our peoples are demanding action and demanding it now. I believe we can and must respond. We have the will. Collectively, we have the means. We must accelerate the plan and act before it is too late. My Government remains committed to the task.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Moustapha Niasse, Prime Minister of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Niasse (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Five years ago in Copenhagen, Denmark, our respective Governments met and agreed to address, jointly and in

a spirit of solidarity, the social problems confronting them, which, to differing degrees, are common to all countries throughout the world today, without exception. I refer in particular to poverty and its increasing prevalence among women, unemployment and underemployment.

All this is true. Five years ago, the international community as a whole solemnly reaffirmed its deep conviction that democracy, respect for human rights, transparency and the good management of public affairs were matters of priority and preconditions of the guarantee of social development for all, centred on the human individual and in respect for his or her dignity. In brief, nations took the historic decision in Copenhagen to make man the starting point and end of development.

In taking stock today, we must recognize here and now that the progress made in implementing the 10 commitments of Copenhagen have not met our legitimate expectations. Indeed, social inequalities within countries and between States and nations of the North and South have continued to grow. At the same time, poverty has expanded and famine and malnutrition continue to afflict many regions of the world today. The recent international financial crisis, which has not yet fully abated, and the controversial effects of globalization have also helped to exacerbate the social situation on the five continents. In addition to all this, we have seen the expansion of such endemic diseases as malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS. The exponential growth of the latter in the past few years, particularly on the African continent, poses a very serious threat to peace and development and, I must emphasize, a serious challenge to mankind.

Everyone knows and recognizes that progress has been slow over the past five years in terms of increased access to basic services, food and drinking water in particular. The World Education Forum, which was convened in Senegal by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in April this year, found it unacceptable that, in this third millennium, 113 million children should remain without access to primary education, while 880 million adults throughout the world remain illiterate.

In addition, we see an increasingly serious situation where child soldiers aged 8 to 14 — guns and grenades in their hands — are fighting in conflicts, including in Africa. The situation remains critical in Africa and in the so-called least developed countries, where indicators point to accelerated deterioration in living standards. In that context, in 41 of Africa's 53 countries, life expectancy is less than 60 years, and is sometimes about 40 years. Can this be acceptable? Why does it occur, and for how much longer will it continue?

In sub-Saharan Africa, 59 per cent of the urban population lives below the poverty line, in unspeakable sanitary, safety and unemployment conditions.

It is because of all these factors that achievements in the sphere of economic and social development have been endangered or even negated by armed conflict, with the resultant hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons and the massive destruction of material resources, as well as by the AIDS pandemic, which we have all deplored.

The decline in official development assistance, which has already been noted by the United Nations and by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the debt burden; and tariff and non-tariff barriers that limit access by African exports to the world market: these are obstacles in the already difficult efforts made by the countries of the South to escape underdevelopment.

This situation requires the involvement of the entire international community, because we are firmly convinced that no part of the world can live in peace and stability when other peoples are left in poverty or destitution. Even if it is agreed that it is the responsibility of each Government to meet the aspirations of its own population, it is no less true that the challenges of development remain universal challenges in this globalized world, where interdependence and solidarity among nations must be the golden rule.

In that light, the war on poverty must no longer be limited to speeches and good intentions. The war on poverty and underdevelopment requires concerted action by all. In that struggle we need not systems based on assistance, but genuine, responsible, mutually advantageous partnership based on consistent, open and practical reactions and mechanisms that will make a difference and will be effective and stable.

We are engaged in a huge programme of political and economic reform, and we wish at the same time to produce strong, competitive and lasting economic

growth. But we have to accept the fact that, as we say in Senegal, "you cannot eat economic growth". It does not in itself guarantee the dignity and fulfilment to which all the world's peoples aspire, as observed here three days ago by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. We share his views and echo the distress call he issued.

We must do all in our power, neglecting no possible action, to spare the world, today and in the future, from the tragedy of powerlessness and despair — and worse, from the scourge of poverty among peoples, nations, societies and States. What are we to do in the face of problems relating to the future of peace and of mankind? We must walk together hand in hand to win and not to lose; to live, to survive and to struggle, not to disappear in the rubble of war.

At the beginning of this hopeful new millennium and this new century, we need to pool our capital, including our human capital, to create a "virtuous circle" of high-quality growth that embodies what Mr. Michel Camdessus has referred to as the circular relationship among macroeconomic and monetary stability, the improvement of the environment and the reduction of poverty.

The future strategies of the international community and of its members — in North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, Asia and the ocean countries — should be formed around this "virtuous circle", to lay the foundations of a new, human form of globalization that will be consciously and willingly fuelled by the inexhaustible resources of the human mind and of the culture of the universal. That is the price of peace. Are we willing to pay it?

In the face of the many obstacles it faces, my country, Senegal, must continue to work with other like-minded nations to rebuild the foundations of a society of participatory development. We are doing this by attaching high priority to improving the lives of poor and destitute families, orphans, disabled people who lack support and hope, women left on their own, abandoned and forgotten elderly people and other vulnerable social groups — without, of course, forgetting those who generate progress, who produce goods, services and growth for development. We have undertaken the commitment to do this in ongoing consultation and collaboration with all our partners, with civil society, with the private sector and with non-governmental organizations. We welcome the representatives of those organizations and thank them for their efforts on behalf of the world's peoples.

We must not be discouraged. The age of the Internet, the globalization of trade, emerging capital, culture, knowledge, science and technology transfers should enable human beings, with our hopes, expectations, dreams and capacity, to guide patiently, methodically and intelligently the changes inspired by our mission in history, evolution and the promotion of humankind.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Chedli Neffati, Minister for Social Affairs of Tunisia.

Mr. Neffati (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like first of all to warmly congratulate Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, on his election as President of this special session of the General Assembly. I would also like to congratulate the members of the Bureau on their election, and to wish them every success in their work. I would also like to convey my high esteem and respect to Mr. Kofi Annan for his constructive positions on humanitarian and other topical issues. My thanks also go to the Swiss authorities, who have made the holding of this special session possible under the best of circumstances.

This session, entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world", is being held five years after the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen. At that Summit countries and international organizations committed themselves to work towards achieving various targets for integrated, sustainable development. We are called upon today to assess objectively what has been achieved, and to identify the difficulties that have prevented the attainment of the aspirations of the international community and the peoples of the world in the area of integrated social development.

Recent years have been marked by the establishment of a new order based upon market economy, liberalization of trade, globalization of the economy and the informatics revolution. This situation has made it possible to make a qualitative leap and substantial economic progress, at least for some countries. However, peoples' aspirations for greater equality and social justice have not received sufficient support from the international community, in particular

because of the reduction in financial resources granted within the context of official development assistance. That assistance currently amounts to a mere 0.2 per cent of the gross national product of industrialized countries. The example of certain countries in northern Europe that have met the commitment they made at the Copenhagen Summit is an exception.

This situation has accentuated the divide between nations, given rise to many economic and social crises, increased unemployment and produced diseases and other scourges for which poverty provides an ideal breeding ground. It has also aggravated the phenomenon of exclusion and marginalization that now threatens peace and stability throughout the world.

At the dawn of the new millennium, mankind has achieved rapid progress and development in a way that was not possible in previous centuries. Along with this economic prosperity we also see increased poverty and indigence in a large number of the regions of the world. This has increased the marginalization of those regions and prevented them from benefiting from the fruits of the new global economic order. The reports of international organizations — especially the United Nations Development Programme *Human Development Report* — are hardly more optimistic. Poverty has become one of the greatest scourges threatening the stability of societies in the course of the last few decades, sparing neither developed nor developing countries. In fact, over 1.3 billion persons live on less than $1 per day. The predictions of the specialized agencies are no more reassuring, as over 3 billion persons will be living on less that $1 per day by the year 2004.

The Secretary-General's report and the statements made at this session have described the difficulties faced by countries in achieving the Copenhagen commitments. Mention has been made of the debt burden, the rise in certain scourges and the reduction in international development aid. I note the considerable efforts made by Member States to achieve development in accordance with their capabilities, in particular with regard to social integration, employment and the eradication of poverty. Tunisia's report, the overall preparation of which has been undertaken by President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali since his accession to power, integrates the two approaches of economic and social reform. This lies at the centre of activities to ensure security and stability and to preserve a social equilibrium by cultivating the principles of dialogue, conciliation and national solidarity.

We have concentrated specifically on the creation of jobs for young people, in particular by encouraging them to create their own projects. Young people are also the beneficiaries of grants given by the Tunisian Solidarity Bank, and of the national employment fund.

Social integration programmes in Tunisia touch all groups of people and also address the needs of special groups.

Tunisia has also given priority to fighting poverty and has focused on the development of the country's most disadvantaged regions. This is being done through the 26/26 National Solidarity Fund, which benefits over 1,332 areas and over 171,000 families. Those families enjoy basic social services and benefit from income-generating activities. This has enabled us to improve our basic indicators and to decrease the rate of poverty, which is currently estimated at 6 per cent.

On the basis of his own experience in the field of solidarity, President Ben Ali has launched an appeal for the establishment of a world solidarity fund to be financed through voluntary contributions. This fund would supplement the various current mechanisms and arrangements and help make it possible to eradicate poverty and promote the development of the world's most disadvantaged regions, particularly in the poorest countries. We hope that this humanitarian proposal — which has the support of the African Group, the Arab Group, the Group of 77 and the first African-European summit, held in Cairo — will benefit from, and enjoy the support and acceptance of, those present here. I venture to express the hope that this special session will take this proposal on board and make it part of the new initiatives in the final declaration reflecting the various positions formulated by participating countries in the context of an overall consensus.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Alejandra Krauss, Minister of Planning of Chile.

Mrs. Krauss (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): This special session of the General Assembly is particularly meaningful for Chile in that it coincides almost exactly with the beginning of the third administration of a coalition that has been successful in three popular ballots since 1990. Like previous programmes, my Government's programme is based on the same

principles and values contained in the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at Copenhagen. We want to make economic growth compatible with equality.

Our ongoing concern for social development has enabled us to make sustained progress in nearly every area of development. The report we have circulated gives a detailed account of our achievements during the 1990s. At the same time, we have implemented a set of second-generation reforms, the most relevant of which is no doubt the educational reform. We hope that reform will substantially improve the quality of education at the primary, secondary and higher levels. We also expect that the number of children enrolled in pre-school education will double over the next six years.

The broad consensus generated around the Programme of Action adopted in 1995 in Copenhagen has allowed us to reaffirm our commitment to continuing to promote social development in the face of new challenges. Given our achievements, particularly those attained over the past six years, today we are setting ourselves even more ambitious goals. Our Government has proposed the challenge of combining growth with equality. We would like to carry on in the path of economic growth, but we would also like to go forward with equal rights, strengthening citizenship. Growth with equality requires a coherent, integrated, participatory and tolerant society. The equality we seek is one that increases opportunities while respecting diversity. Growth with equality means strengthening human rights; guaranteeing the right of all to quality education; the right to an honest and well-remunerated job; and the rights to health and shelter. Growth with equality means increasing social development in order to attain increased human development.

Ms. Avila Seifert (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We are convinced that we cannot be satisfied with our own progress if we accept poverty, inequalities and social injustice beyond our borders. The responsibility for overcoming these problems falls to each of us. It rests primarily with each State and the organizations that make up civil society in every nation, but it also rests with the international system, which must seek to eliminate every difficulty that prevents or hinders social development in every nation. As expressed in the Copenhagen Declaration itself, solving such problems is a prerequisite to achieving and maintaining peace and security in and among our countries.

Five years after the Copenhagen meeting, the world is still experiencing wide-ranging changes. Globalization has set the stage of continuous exchange, information flows, instant communication and remote action. Opening economic boundaries increases competitiveness and imposes increasingly demanding requirements in terms of technological innovation and responsiveness to changing scenarios. Economic globalization and market performance have brought progress and development to our nations, but these elements have also raised concerns among a significant number of people who have failed to share in the prosperity and have found themselves lagging behind.

At the same time, new and complex social issues have emerged, requiring innovative responses that involve both the State and society as a whole. In the declaration that we expect to sign at the end of this session, these problems are described in graphic terms: the violence and insecurity endemic to big cities, ageing populations, unemployed youth, women's poverty, environmental degradation, neglected children and the demands of ethnic minorities. All these problems occur without distinction of income or borders.

The demands and responsibilities of our Governments are expressed in this great mandate for social integration, which allows barriers and inequalities to be overcome and progress to be extended to all without exclusion. This imperative forces us to open up more and improved opportunities in the fields of education, technology, science and ongoing labour training in order to allow people to exercise the right to employment. It enables workers to generate a secure flow of income for themselves and their families. It also compels us to improve the State's capacity to accept citizens in all their diversity, generating responses not only to such problems as poverty, quality of life and the satisfaction of basic needs, but also to such issues as the rights of third-generation citizens. These rights pertain to culture, identity, respect for minorities, the quality of social coexistence and the strengthening of democracy, all of which open new opportunities for decentralization and increased participation.

We must achieve these transformations in order to move from an era of change to a change of era, in

which everyone can grow in equality and freedom. The new era must require the integration of the weakest and most destitute. People and communities will be at the heart of change, which must arise from their own initiatives. Neither the market nor financial flows can drive these transformations, nor do we conceive these changes as being imposed by the authoritarian action of an enlightened elite guided by the technocratic views that have hurt us so deeply in the very recent past. Peaceful coexistence can be built when rights and obligations are clear to and respected by everyone. We must manage changes with responsibility, opening new space for people's freedom, while extending solidarity among nations, fostering creativity and enriching social cohesion in our communities.

A new way for humanity was outlined five years ago in Copenhagen. We truly believe that travelling that path will lead us to a more integrated world on sound and lasting foundations. Our country can attest to this because of what it has done for more than a decade as a result of the sovereign decisions of its citizens. We fully believe that, by the end of this decade, when Chile will celebrate the 200th anniversary of its independence, our country will be a fully matured nation of free people.

We would like to invite the community of nations to reaffirm the Copenhagen commitments and to make resolute progress towards the new horizons that we will agree here. In that way, we will be able to build a new kind of development, focused on the human being and safeguarding his or her dignity. Growth with equality is not a task for Chile alone. We would like to extend an invitation to the entire international community to take up this challenge and to make it an emblem of the history of humankind in the twenty-first century.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Gyula Pulay, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs of Hungary.

Mr. Pulay (Hungary): Let me start by congratulating Mr. Gurirab on his election as the President of the General Assembly at this very important session. I also compliment the Secretary-General on his outstanding preparations for this session.

Five years have passed since the world's heads of State and Government convened in Copenhagen in order to decide on collective action to combat the severe social problems arising around the globe. The Summit made a critical contribution to the recognition that these problems were not confined to the least developed countries, but that discrimination, poverty, unemployment and social exclusion were present in every society. While they may differ in extent by country, the same social and economic mechanisms causing these phenomena can often be captured universally. There is a need for the international community to unite its efforts and to take concerted action in order to mitigate and overcome these problems.

In the context of international cooperation, Hungary is actively involved in the implementation of the decisions taken at the Copenhagen Summit — and, in a broader sense, of the spirit of Copenhagen. In January 1999 in Budapest, we held regional tripartite consultations on the follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit, where we evaluated the Summit's effects on employment policy. We also attended the European meeting on social development organized by the Council of Europe and the Irish Government, which was focused on social integration, an enabling environment and the eradication of poverty.

We consider human rights and fundamental freedoms to be indispensable prerequisites for social progress. It is in that spirit that we took part in drafting and submitting for approval the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. In that regard, we endorse the European Union proposal concerning the political declaration: that the principles incorporated in the ILO Declaration must be observed.

By ratifying Convention 138 on the minimum age of employment, Hungary completed its ratification of the core ILO conventions. We were among the first to ratify the ILO Convention concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, and we provide financial support to the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).

The Copenhagen decisions have had a marked influence on our national policies as well. Looking back, the past five years have seen significant developments in the social sphere, of which we have given a detailed account in our national report, copies of which have been sent to all delegations. Let me highlight a few of those developments.

An unfavourable situation in the early 1990s, which was characterized by the persistence of high unemployment and a low participation rate, has been replaced by more favourable tendencies. There has been a shift in emphasis from an initial crisis-management strategy towards meeting growing labour demand, against a background of economic recovery, the development of economically depressed regions, an increasing number of active employment policy measures, and the upgrading of the vocational training system. The Government, having come into office in 1998, made a fresh start in setting employment policy objectives that were in full compliance with commitment 3 of the Copenhagen Declaration. It set as its priority the task of radically increasing the number of jobs, and it took measures to align its employment policy and economic strategy more closely. Employment figures of recent years have proven that policy right: unemployment fell to 7 per cent, while employment grew steadily and was 3 per cent higher in 1999 than in the preceding year. For 2000, a Government resolution on employment policy objectives already reflects the guidelines of the European employment strategy, setting as its goals steady employment growth and, in the long run, the achievement of the possibility of full employment.

We have taken important measures to promote equal opportunities for the disabled, along with their social inclusion and employment. Hungary has been awarded an international Roosevelt Prize for adopting legislation on equal opportunities and rights for the disabled, and for the measures taken in its implementation this year.

There is another area I wish to highlight, to which Hungary is devoting primary attention: the issue of strengthening the position of families, increasing respect for them, enhancing their security and supporting them in order to enable parents to rear their children in suitable financial conditions and in accordance with appropriate intellectual and moral standards. In order to attain those objectives, the Government has taken comprehensive measures whose importance is well illustrated by the 60 per cent increase over the past two years in budget allocations for support of families.

The paramount importance of this special session is that, by relying on the accomplishments of Copenhagen, the international community is aiming to address the challenges of globalization at the highest level. While we have taken advantage of the special opportunities offered by globalization and technological advances, social inequities, poverty and exclusion continue to persist. We have also realized that the creation of a better, more equitable world ensuring equal opportunities for all people requires stable economic policies, long-term social programmes and concerted international action.

My delegation sincerely hopes that the documents to be adopted at this Geneva session will contribute to the accomplishment of our common objectives.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Petro Ovtcharenko, First Deputy to the Minister for Labour and Social Affairs of Ukraine.

Mr. Ovtcharenko (Ukraine) (*spoke in Russian*): I am proud to be representing my country at this very important forum. It gives me pleasure to greet all participants in this special session. On behalf of the President and the people of Ukraine, I convey our thanks to the Secretariat for organizing this session, and to the Government and the people of Switzerland for their hospitality and their attentiveness to the participants both in the session itself and in the Geneva 2000 Forum for non-governmental organizations.

Mankind will never be able to live in peace unless people can enjoy security in their daily lives. How are we to attain that objective? Security can best be guaranteed by democratic, market-economy States with a strong civil society, in which human rights are respected and in which individuals are responsible for their own destinies. That is the path that Ukraine is continuing to take. For our Government, social progress is the principal indicator of success.

Demonstrating my Government's commitment to the Copenhagen commitments, further steps in that direction are being taken by the President of Ukraine, Mr. Leonid D. Kuchma, by the Government and by all our partners in civil society. Today, efforts are focused on creating conditions propitious for economic growth as a basis for improvements in the social sphere and for improving the standard of living. The programme adopted by Ukraine's new cabinet, led by Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko, is entitled "Reforms for well-being", and its focus is on human beings. While proving to be rather slower than we had hoped, the process of restructuring the economy, the farming sector and the financial sphere is under way. We are

also reforming our laws and our social security system; we are providing targeted social assistance and helping entrepreneurs and the self-employed.

Over the past six months, we have seen that the country has the potential to carry out economic reforms that will shortly have social effects. After eight years of a falling gross domestic product, there has been an increase of 5.4 per cent in recent months. Industrial growth has also increased. But despite its efforts, my Government continues to encounter serious difficulties in ensuring social development. Creating a democratic market society from a subsidy-oriented economy is no easy task, and it is frequently accompanied by a drop in the population's standard of living; in our case, the situation is exacerbated by a need to overcome the negative effects of the Chernobyl disaster.

The Government is focusing on the search for solutions to these problems. Overcoming poverty is one of its priority tasks. Work is also continuing on programmes to ensure citizens' constitutional rights in the areas of employment and income, education, health, development of democracy and social integration. The Government is focusing in particular on socially vulnerable groups, first and foremost on children, because they suffer in particular from the economic crisis and drops in living standards; on women, who because of unemployment are unable to ensure the well-being of their children; and on invalids, who need not only material support but also social adaptation.

In an attempt to solve these problems under conditions of severe shortages in economic and other resources, Ukraine is trying to find the most rational way of focusing a very transparent and rational system of priorities. For example, we focused significant efforts on establishing social monitoring. Ukraine was the first country to undertake a study of child labour. Its study of living conditions, which is the basis for the development of the programme to combat poverty, was given high marks by the World Bank. Ukraine is also carrying out its "Children of Ukraine" national programme, whose basic task is to create favourable conditions for the multifaceted development of children and to ensure their legal and social protection.

Assistance from industrially developed countries to ensure more rapid integration into the world economy and trade of countries carrying out major reforms will certainly make possible new sources of financing. In this connection, we would like to point out the penetrating analysis of the present situation in Eastern European countries, and particularly that of countries with economies in transition, contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Copenhagen commitments submitted to the thirty-eighth session of the Commission on Social Development. We fully agree with its conclusion that the most important problem of countries with economies in transition is balancing State regulation of the economy with encouragement for private initiative.

Our delegation is interested in the initiative proposed by the Russian Federation here in this hall to carry out under the auspices of the United Nations a major, high-level regional conference to discuss the social development problems of countries with economies in transition and to seek additional resources to that end.

In achieving the goals established at Copenhagen, ensuring full, productive employment plays a very important role. We can say without exaggeration that this is precisely the key that will open the door to a socially integrated society. However, Ukraine needs to restructure its economy, with massive and very rapid privatization, including that of major firms. Our country's open-door policy, which is aimed at ensuring competition and maximum freedom of choice for the consumer, has led to unemployment. We are doing everything we can to develop an effective labour market policy, although results are still far from being what we would like them to be. We must take note of the importance of supporting opportunities for countries with economies in transition to overcome barriers to participation in the globalization of the world economy by ensuring that their products have access to world markets, ending tariff barriers and guaranteeing greater transparency and universality in multilateral trade.

We support the international community's efforts to develop further initiatives to implement the decisions of world meetings on social development. Our delegation is convinced that this special session of the General Assembly will be more oriented towards specific, practical activities. The concept of steady, human-centred development is set out in the draft political declaration and final document of this session and is in harmony with our vision of how to resolve socio-economic problems in Ukraine.

In conclusion, we would like once again to stress that Ukraine is open to mutually beneficial cooperation aimed at achieving harmonious social development.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Victor Ivanov, Vice-Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Ivanov (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action on Social Development indeed show that people should be the focus of our activities in ensuring sustainable development, overcoming poverty, ensuring full employment and encouraging social integration in order to create a stable, safe and just society for all. Globalization and the rapid development of technological advances have made social and economic development possible. But that development is also accompanied by serious problems due to widespread financial crises and the vicissitudes of markets and their effects. There are still very major obstacles to further integration and equitable participation in the world economy by developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

While noting the great significance of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, the Republic of Kazakhstan has identified priorities and is carrying out fundamental tasks contained in those documents. We have achieved macroeconomic stability and are developing democratic institutions. Measures are also being taken to ensure that economic policies are in place to bring about social development. Through a decree by President Nazarbaev we have put in place a long-term strategy for national development that identifies key aspects for our society's socio-economic development in the mid-term. The programme's priorities are a productive employment system in the formal sector, encouraging small and medium-sized businesses, developing microcredit, pension reform and minimum pensions, and strengthening social security. In implementing the programme, our Government is working to combat poverty and unemployment through a programme covering the years 2000-2002.

The regional employment programmes include sectoral initiatives developed working hand-in-hand with the labour unions, employers and non-governmental organizations. The aims are to reduce poverty, lower unemployment, ensure an active employment policy, target social assistance at poor citizens who are unable to work and at vulnerable groups of the population to protect them from unemployment and to ensure social and economic development in the country. The programme calls for Government budget allocations for social needs to reach 1 per cent of our gross domestic product.

Budgets for the years in question will include rules relating to the reservation of resources for the funding of targeted social assistance for low-income people depending on the need in each region.

In keeping with national policy and in cooperation with the trade unions and employers associations, we have concluded a general agreement ensuring coordination of activities in the labour market and protection of environmental and workplace safety.

We also recall the proverb that if one wants to help a man for just a day, give him food, but if one wants to help him for a lifetime, give him an education. Ensuring general education is one of the priority tasks of our State. Mandatory, compulsory free, secondary education is enshrined in our Constitution. We have a new educational system based on the principle of continuous education with four levels from primary through post-graduate education in keeping with international standards. This system has produced highly trained specialists.

In speaking to the participants of this social summit, I should like to draw the attention of leaders of multinational companies who have been investing in countries with economies in transition to the need to train specialists with up-to-date skills with a view to establishing competition and creating economic growth. It is our conviction that this makes possible a real reduction in poverty and an increase in employment.

We should also like to stress the link between unemployment, poverty and the drug business. The problems in combating the drug trade have slowly but surely in recent years become increasingly serious social problems.

Central Asia, and Kazakhstan in particular, have become a reliable transit corridor for drugs from the countries of the Far East, South-East Asia and elsewhere to Eastern and Western Europe. We are particularly concerned about increased drug use among young people. In the framework of the United Nations

project to map areas of cultivation of illicit drug crops in Kazakhstan, our Republic is seeking out the main cultivation centres for narcotic crops. In our opinion, this programme is the only realistic way of assessing risk factors and setting priorities in the campaign against drug abuse and, thus, against unemployment and poverty. We therefore call on the international community actively to fight this scourge, because individual States and international organizations cannot solve this problem alone.

In conclusion, we would note that Kazakhstan is ready to make every effort to enhance living standards, to participate in the drafting of initiatives and to ensure the implementation of the Copenhagen Programme of Action. At the dawn of the third millennium, aware of our responsibility to future generations, we are committed on our path towards social development and strengthening democracy. We call on all peoples, regardless of their social situation, and on the international community to join efforts to meet the general goal of building a more equitable and just world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Mr. Nudžeim Rečica, Assistant Minister for Civil Affairs and Communications of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Rečica (Bosnia and Herzegovina): When the World Summit for Social Development was held in Copenhagen in March 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina was still suffering enormous war destruction. The 10 commitments adopted at the Summit represented the distant future for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Today, five years after the Copenhagen Summit, when we analyse the results achieved and progress made, we see that Bosnia and Herzegovina has the peace it eagerly wanted and that the commitments made in Copenhagen, especially those concerning national issues, are increasingly leading Bosnia and Herzegovina's everyday life on the path towards sustainable development. Unfortunately, on the way towards the full implementation of the said commitments, there are still many obstacles ahead.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities are aware of the fact, which is becoming more obvious by the day, that, in the globalization process, international integration is the only possible way towards the establishment of sustainable social development, which must be mostly based on activities that we have to undertake at the national level, but which should be supported by the key international institutions and developed countries.

During the post-war period, concrete steps are being taken regarding the implementation of the provisions of the Copenhagen Declaration, particularly towards the establishment of the legal, economic, social and cultural bases of social development. A number of legislative regulations have been enacted in the fields of social policy, civil service and labour issues. Intensive efforts have been made to promote social and employment programmes, as well as to modernize the education process.

Nevertheless, a very difficult economic and social situation is our reality. The reasons for insufficient and slow economic and social recovery are the war waged in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its consequences, as well as a still unstable political situation in the region; the transition of the country's overall economy from the former socialist to the market economy; and the privatization process.

The consequences of the four-year war and enormous destruction are still strongly felt both in the economy and in infrastructure, and especially in the social infrastructure. Perhaps the strongest blow for Bosnia and Herzegovina was the fact that over half of its pre-war population became refugees and displaced persons, the majority of whom are still waiting to return. About 600,000 refugees and displaced persons have returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina, but of this number, some 200,000 are still waiting to return to their own homes. About 600,000 refugees abroad are waiting to return without having their status resolved in the countries in which they are staying. In addition, about 700,000 internally displaced persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina are waiting to return to their homes. This is a serious problem — not only politically, but also economically and socially — which Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot resolve by itself. The figures are extremely high, taking into account that the entire population of the country is 4.5 million.

As a result of the great war destruction, the economic transition of the country and the privatization process, the factor that has most heavily slowed both economic and social development is the employment situation. The unemployment indicators show that the number of unemployed today in Bosnia and Herzegovina is 2.5 times higher than it was in the pre-

war year, 1991. Expressed in figures, this statistic represents some 750,000 people looking for a job. The problem becomes even more complex when we consider that the number of the employed, compared to that of the pre-war period, has decreased.

Although the employment rate has tended to rise over the past five years, a great shock in the employment sector came with the demobilization of about 300,000 veterans in the years following the end of the war, as well as with the current extensive activities to reduce the military forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The social situation I have described is made even more complex by the fact that a large number of families in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose breadwinners were killed, need to be provided for, as do the large number of disabled persons and civilian war victims.

Profound negative effects on the social picture in Bosnia and Herzegovina are produced by the circumstances of the country's pension and disabled persons' funds. Actually, these funds were emptied on the eve of and particularly during the war, but a financial basis was not provided for the replenishment of these funds, whose substantial property, which might have served for their replenishment, was destroyed or dispossessed.

With the aim of achieving sustainable social development in Bosnia and Herzegovina, under the supervision of the international community represented by the several international institutions existing in the country and led by the Office of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as by the mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to my country, legislation was enacted to cover the basic property issues relevant to the return of refugees and displaced persons to their property. Considerable efforts are being made to consolidate the pension funds, under the patronage of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and all regulations are being harmonized with those of the European Union and the Council of Europe, whose membership Bosnia and Herzegovina would like to join in the near future.

Owing to the privatization process that is under way — and which in fact has just been initiated — investment in the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina has slowed down. Unfortunately, the social picture in Bosnia and Herzegovina has deteriorated due to the country's external debts. Actually, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been trying to meet its obligations by making regular repayments of its foreign debts in order to be able to apply at the same time for the new finances necessary to a sustainable economy and social development.

Agreements have been made on debt repayment and rescheduling with the World Bank and the London and Paris Clubs of trustees. However, the negative effects of regular servicing of the foreign debts are such that the annual amounts of debt repayment surpass the budgetary allowances appropriated by Bosnia and Herzegovina for education, social and health care and employment. Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the phase of structural adjustment programmes and stand-by arrangements with the IMF. It is indispensable to get acceptable conditions from the IMF and other international financial institutions in the transition period, which would at least partly alleviate the inevitable sharp cuts in the budgetary allowances for social care and education.

Bosnia and Herzegovina takes the view that, for developing countries, countries in transition and, especially, countries emerging from war and which are encountering broad-ranging humanitarian crises, either at home or in the region, it is necessary to find a new concept of debt rescheduling, softening credit requirements and debt write-off, if possible.

Bosnia and Herzegovina calls on the General Assembly at this special session, the Member countries and governmental and non-governmental organizations to pay special attention to the question of adopting special strategies, even burden-sharing and direct material support, for the countries most directly affected by post-conflict situations and special humanitarian crises. Bosnia and Herzegovina still has hundreds of thousands of refugees waiting for their houses and infrastructure to be rebuilt. Conditions should therefore be created for sustainable return. At the same time, as a member of the international community, Bosnia and Herzegovina regularly meets its international commitments concerning the issue of offering temporary asylum for displaced persons. Bosnia and Herzegovina accepted about 60,000 refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a result of the conflict in Kosovo and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In addition to direct aid from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner

for Refugees (UNHCR), support for Bosnia and Herzegovina in providing social care, health care and education for these 60,000 refugees has been minimal, or even non-existent. It is therefore essential to have equal burden-sharing among countries that find themselves in such a situation, and to work out programmes of concrete aid.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been making efforts to ensure transparent management, promote the anti-corruption struggle and establish the complete rule of law. Bosnia and Herzegovina sees an opportunity to achieve sustainable social development in the initiative taken recently through the establishment of the Stability Pact for South-East Europe, which is intended to create a safe environment for mutual development and cooperation among the countries of the region. We expect full support in the implementation of this very important project from the United States of America and from the countries of the European Union.

The presence of the international community and of international military forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains a necessity with the aim of implementing the Dayton Agreement and establishing Bosnia and Herzegovina as an open, democratic, multi-ethnic society of equal citizens, a society of equal opportunities irrespective of nationality, religion or political affiliation. Let the new Bosnia and Herzegovina be a country of equal opportunities for all citizens. Let knowledge and ability be the prevailing factors. A modern set-up and a democratic Bosnia and Herzegovina with a well devised social policy and with a modern and sustainable economy will be our contribution to global policy and to social peace and progress in the world. I urge members to help us in those efforts.

The Acting President: I call next on His Excellency Mr. Les Luck, Chairman of the delegation of Australia.

Mr. Luck (Australia): The Australian Government welcomes the opportunity provided by this special session for Governments to review implementation of the outcomes of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development and to develop strategies for future action. The goals of Copenhagen cannot be achieved by States acting alone. The international community, the United Nations, multilateral financial institutions, regional organizations, local authorities, business, non-governmental organizations, communities and individuals all have a positive contribution to make towards achieving sustainable social development.

The Australian Government believes that the primary goal of this session is to create and support a framework for a working partnership among all those levels, recognizing rights and responsibilities. There are a number of areas in which this partnership is crucial, and none more so than managing globalization. As the Secretary-General has said, if we are to get the best out of globalization and avoid the worst, we must learn to govern better, and to govern better together. Partnerships between countries and with international financial institutions are essential to develop strategies to manage change and to ensure that the benefits of globalization are understood and are spread as widely as possible.

A good example of such partnership is the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative. Australia is a strong supporter of the Initiative. In addition to existing multilateral contributions, the Australian Government announced in April that it would provide 100 per cent bilateral debt forgiveness to countries which qualify for relief under the HIPC Initiative.

In the five years since the World Summit, Australia has taken seriously its own task of translating Copenhagen's commitments into international and domestic action. Australia is a major international development assistance donor in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Our aid for education and training, health and population programmes, water supply and sanitation, and government and civil society has more than doubled in absolute terms in the last decade, and is now estimated to be around 40 per cent of total aid programme expenditure.

Australia sees good governance as an essential precondition for sustainable development, and as a cornerstone of effective national and international partnerships for achieving the Copenhagen goals. Where there is corruption, poor control of public funds, lack of accountability and transparency, and abuses of human rights, development inevitably suffers. Aid efforts for poverty reduction and sustainable development are also undermined.

Australia is active in the international promotion of good governance. In the period 2000-2001 Australia will spend approximately $245 million on assisting

partner countries to improve their economic, social, institutional and regulatory systems. During the recent session of the Commission on Human Rights, a cross-regional coalition of countries, including Australia, put forward a draft resolution on the role of good governance in the promotion of human rights. That draft resolution, adopted without a vote, recognized the importance of a national and international environment conducive to the full enjoyment of human rights, and also recognized the need in this context to promote partnership approaches to international development cooperation.

Australia is a society committed to the principle of fairness for all. Government policies aim to create a society in which diversity is celebrated, communities are cohesive and self-reliant, families are strengthened, and individuals have access to social and economic opportunities regardless of race, gender or disability.

The Australian Government has put in place a range of national policies consistent with the core social development objectives of the World Summit. We are committed to eradicating poverty in Australia by creating and maintaining a policy environment that permits sustained economic and employment growth, including by assisting unemployed people to re-engage with work and with their communities. Improvements in the structure and delivery of income support programmes also ensure an adequate social safety net for those at risk of poverty.

The Australian Government also has developed a range of policies specifically designed to assist low-income families, youth, women, people from aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or non-English-speaking backgrounds, and people with disabilities, to obtain and retain employment. Australia has a long history of ensuring that all Australians have universal and equitable access to primary health care and to education. The Government's contribution to primary health care for indigenous Australians in particular has quadrupled over the past decade, and the Australian Government has also made educational equity for indigenous Australians a key national priority.

The Government's policy approach to social development also recognizes the importance of strong families and communities: they provide the most effective social support systems and are crucial to maintaining a cohesive and compassionate society. Specific strategies are in place to support rural and remote communities and to minimize the particular disadvantages they experience.

The Australian Government also believes that national social development goals cannot be achieved by government action alone. We recognize and value the contribution that can be made by civil society and by the community towards developing innovative and effective solutions to social development problems. The Government has sought to develop a social coalition or partnership to bring together the experience and insights of a range of organizations — churches, voluntary organizations and all levels of Government — in developing and implementing social policy. We are also actively seeking to improve the capacity of our institutions, communities, businesses and individuals to support our social development.

The Government is encouraging greater corporate and individual philanthropy, whereby those who have benefited most from society's opportunities can contribute in practical ways to assisting the less fortunate. A high-level board of corporate and charitable organizations chaired by the Prime Minister has been established to pursue this issue and to encourage brokerages between the corporate and charitable sectors.

The Government is seeking to develop further the principle of mutual obligation in welfare reform, whereby those who benefit from government support have an obligation to give something back to the community in return. This initiative is about creating working partnerships between the Government and other stakeholders that recognize both rights and responsibilities and provide an environment conducive to economic improvement.

Australia very much hopes that this special session will create a lasting framework for a working partnership between all levels of the international community to further implement the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Marco Antonio Suazo, Chairman of the delegation of Honduras.

Mr. Suazo (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to join others who have spoken before me in thanking and congratulating you, Madam, on your election to preside over this special session of the General Assembly devoted to social development.

I have the honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the people and the Government of Honduras, under the leadership of Mr. Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé. I would also like, on his behalf, to thank the people and the Government of Switzerland for their hospitality in hosting this session.

The various social development topics being dealt with at this session are of perennial importance for our country. Ours is a developing country vulnerable to natural phenomena, the negative impact of globalization and the crushing weight of external debt. In the next few days, we shall assess the developments and achievements that have been made to date with regard to social development since the holding of the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen, five years ago.

Honduras's Constitution guarantees the rights to liberty, health and education without regard to race, gender, religion or social status. Conscious of its social responsibility, and in adherence to its Constitution, the Government of Honduras has in the course of recent years put in place a series of laws aimed at protecting the most vulnerable groups of our society. Those laws include, for example, the law against domestic violence, the code of childhood and adolescence, the law creating the National Institute for Women at the level of State secretariat, the law on HIV/AIDS and the recently approved equal opportunity law. These laws constitute a part of the commitment we undertook at Denmark and are intended to lead to the establishment of mechanisms and structures that ensure social justice in our country.

Despite the achievements it has attained, Honduras has suffered the consequences and negative effects of globalization, which, along with the external debt, pose a serious obstacle to making progress on the goals established by the Government in the social sector. The majority of our people live in poverty, and they struggle on a daily basis alongside our Government to eradicate the structural causes of poverty, under which — according to the statistics of international financial institutions — half of our families live.

Added to the already serious economic situation in our country resulting from foreign debt and structural adjustment measures, our nation — which through enormous efforts had been satisfactorily meeting the basic needs of the population — has also had to face the devastating effects of the natural phenomenon that everyone here knows as hurricane Mitch, whose legacy of death and destruction in our country is known throughout the world. To date, we have not been able fully to repair the damage to road infrastructure caused by it.

It is for this reason that in January of this year my delegation supported the adoption of General Assembly resolution 54/202, entitled "Enhancing international cooperation towards a durable solution to the external debt problem of developing countries". That resolution welcomes the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative and reiterates the call for industrialized countries that have not yet contributed to the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility, now renamed the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility, to do so as soon as possible. It also expresses its appreciation for the action taken by the creditor countries of the Paris Club with regard to the debts of countries affected by hurricane Mitch, and reiterates the need for debt relief promises to come to fruition within the shortest possible time-frames in order for our countries to be able to free up the requisite resources for reconstruction efforts.

Our Government would like to reiterate its firm commitment to make progress in the implementation of social sector projects to benefit its citizens. To that end, the Government of Honduras has established funds and developed programmes and projects in the housing, health and education sectors. Moreover, the Government has created incentives for families that include financial assistance to promote greater access to public schools throughout the country. Of particular importance among those programmes, projects and funds are the Honduran Social Investment Fund, the Honduran Fund for Productivity and Housing and the Social Fund for Housing. Programmes include the Family Allowance Programme, the Comprehensive Development Programme for Women and the Honduran Community Education Project. For its part, Honduras's National Congress has established an office for social planning and a system that disseminates to the population information on every social sector law adopted by the Congress. These institutions, along with the laws I mentioned earlier, are the most concrete actions taken to date by the Government of Honduras. They are also proof of our Government's firm resolve to provide all Honduran citizens with the most essential basic services and to meet their needs.

Although the Denmark goals assumed by our Government have not been fully achieved, the commitments we undertook have served as the basis for our actions. I would like to point out that in this connection all of us do not share either the same financial resources or the same levels of development. It is therefore inconceivable to rigidly expect the goals to be achieved to the same degree.

Finally, we believe that the international community, and developed countries in particular, are primarily called upon to respond to the commitments to be made at this session. Specifically, that response should come by way of increasing official development assistance. There is also an ever-increasing need for changes to be made to the international financial institutions. They must be given a human face.

If we believe that the worst injustice is economic iniquity that prevents us from meeting the basic needs of human beings, then it is up to those who have more to help those who have less. This must be done if we want true social justice in this millennium.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Carlos Santos, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Human Development, Women and Civil Society of Belize.

Mr. Santos (Belize): I would like to thank the General Assembly, on behalf of the Government and the people of Belize, and of our Minister for Human Development, Women and Civil Society, for the opportunity to address its twenty-fourth special session.

My delegation wishes to give special thanks to the Government and the people of Switzerland for their kind hospitality and attentiveness.

The Government of Belize sees social equity as one of the most critical elements of sustainable development and has, since our meeting in Copenhagen, worked actively towards creating the necessary policies and mechanisms to reflect this new development approach. We are well on our way to instituting a tradition of cooperation and collaboration between and among government agencies, as well as with civil society organizations, to ensure that development benefits people, especially women, children, youth, the elderly, the poor and the disadvantaged. This shows that social development has been prioritized and that development means not only improvements in the traditional economic indicators, but also in the standard of living and the enhancement of the quality of life of all the people.

Belize has taken its commitment seriously and has, over the last five years, focused its attention on the three core issues addressed in the Copenhagen Declaration: poverty reduction, expanding productive employment and improving social integration. Please allow me to expand on these.

As to poverty reduction, Belize has remained engaged in promoting the agenda of social development and has developed a National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan. This Plan spells out in an integrated manner the range of policies and activities to be undertaken to eliminate poverty. The six main components of the Plan are economic growth; investments in human capital; investment in health services and health care delivery; housing, shelter and human settlement; social vulnerability and safety nets; and protection and conservation of the environment.

This Plan is comprehensive. It focuses on the economic empowerment of individuals and communities rather than on welfare. It calls for health reform, education reform, land administration reform, social security reform, literacy and the building of democracy and local governance. I am proud to report that, even while this Plan was being developed, the Government wasted no time in beginning to implement some of these activities.

We are developing our National Health Insurance Scheme to improve access and equity in the health-care system. We will soon be launching our literacy campaign. We have passed an act to give more autonomy to local government bodies. We are building homes. We are conserving the environment. We are piloting community co-management schemes. We have passed legislation to protect women from abuse. We have made the reporting of child abuse mandatory. We are revamping the Ministry of Labour to be more responsive to workers' needs and the minimum wage for female-dominated jobs is being revised. And, yes, Belize is blazing the trail in our region in gender mainstreaming.

These are but a few of the things we are doing to eliminate poverty. Other more controversial issues are also being addressed, such as the practice of expelling pregnant students from school and the firing of unwed pregnant teachers. Furthermore, a National AIDS

Commission has been established and tasked with reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Belize.

Three outstanding issues remain. The first is the need to bring macroeconomic planning more in line with measures outlined in our poverty Plan. The second is understanding and addressing the feminization of poverty. The third is developing measurable indicators to effectively monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Plan.

The Government of Belize is resolute in its commitment to eradicating poverty and remains convinced that the test of a country's progress is not just whether we add more to the abundance of those who have, but whether we provide enough opportunities to those who have too little.

As to expanding productive employment, this area is one of the top priority areas for the Government of Belize. In its Party Manifesto, it pledged to create 15,000 new jobs during its term of office from 1998 to 2003. Both the National Strategy for the Elimination of Poverty and the Medium-Term Economic Strategy address this issue quite extensively. Some of the Government of Belize's major programmes include encouraging self-employment for poor households through access to credit and training for small-enterprise development; supporting or developing programmes to increase the capabilities of young men and women for entry into the labour market; and implementing a national policy for tourism, which emphasizes ecotourism and ensures the participation of small and medium-sized Belizean companies in the sector, including community-based and owned ecotourism facilities.

Our commitment in Copenhagen in relation to the issue of productive employment was to expand the quality and quantity of employment opportunities in Belize. Data collected by the Central Statistical Office of the Ministry of Finance indicate that the unemployment rate is slowly decreasing and in 1999 stood at 12.8 per cent. When these figures are disaggregated by sex and age, however, those sectors of the population with the highest unemployment rates remain women, young men and young women. A great deal of work is thus yet to be done in this area if our commitment to reduce unemployment is to be sustained over the medium to long terms.

Concerning social integration, Belize has been relatively successful in its efforts towards immigrant assimilation. Belize is one of the few countries in the world that boasts a multiplicity of cultures and people living together in peace, tranquillity and harmony. This did not just happen, however. Successive Governments have put in place the necessary policies, programmes and strategies that have facilitated this process. Just over one year ago, for example, the Government of Belize implemented an amnesty programme that sought to legalize all displaced and illegal immigrants. The processing of all applications is about one third of the way complete and, as of May 2000, some 5,000 people had been issued permanent residences.

While we can hold our heads high in the international arena over the fact that we continue to be a haven for our less fortunate brothers and sisters in Central America, we continue in our efforts to assimilate our most recent immigrants from South-East Asia. This is proving to be a more difficult task than we anticipated and will require greater participation from all parties concerned, including the immigrants themselves.

The issue of social integration also includes the strengthening of partnerships between government and civil society and the promotion of local-level governance. Some of the key elements of Belize's national strategy to strengthen the partnership between Government and civil society and to support local government mechanisms include the establishment of systematic training for male and female participants within local-level mechanisms for governance; the mobilization and empowerment of community organizations to define and act on local social and economic issues important to them; the establishment of a Ministry of Civil Society in January 2000; and the decision to develop a National Human Development Agenda for Belize.

It is noteworthy that the thrust of the majority of the reforms being proposed by a political reform committee appointed by the Government of Belize, which recently released its recommendations following nationwide consultations, is towards taking power away from ministers and bureaucracies and giving it more directly to the people. This concept, I believe, was ideally captured in our Prime Minister's millennium address on 1 January 2000, when he said:

> "What we are talking about here is the empowerment of civil society: people organized

in non-governmental bodies that work together with government for the benefit of the people."

The Prime Minister goes on to say that

"an issue central to the elimination of poverty is the strengthening of civil society institutions and decision-making processes based on partnerships between central Government, non-governmental organizations and local organizations, such as town councils, village councils and other social groups".

In conclusion, while significant gains have been made in the fight against poverty, we are still not where we want to be or should be. No country, no leader, no individual should be satisfied while a significant portion of our people goes to bed hungry, cannot find meaningful employment or does not participate equitably in the development process. But the task of eradicating poverty, ensuring social integration and expanding employment opportunities requires the cooperation and collaboration of all the stakeholders in our society, including our international development partners. In this respect, Belize expresses its sincere appreciation and thanks to our United Nations partners who continue providing invaluable support and assistance in all our efforts. For this and more we are grateful.

The Government of Belize is firmly committed to the pledges made at the social development Summit in 1995, and will continue its efforts to carry them out. For this, however, we will require the full support of all our partners in development.

Unfortunately, like most other developing countries in our region, Belize is faced with the effects of globalization. We realize that action to eliminate poverty must be swift and innovative if we are to prevent the impending crises that globalization can bring upon us. The "invisible hand" that rules global economic policies seems to be the very hand that foments poverty and unrest in countries such as ours. When our banana quotas are taken away, it breeds poverty among our people; when we cannot protect our farmers or our small businesses, the effect is the opposite of social development; when we are forced to sell our raw materials at prices below production costs and to import products at exorbitant prices, we are exacerbating the sorry plight of our people. What we are saying is that while globalization and trade liberalization continue to rear their ugly heads, it is incumbent on all of us at this special session of the General Assembly on social development to ensure that they are accompanied by an equally conspicuous human face. Our peoples deserve nothing less.

The President: I give the floor to Mrs. Hiwet Zemichael, Director-General, Department of Social Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare of Eritrea.

Mrs. Zemichael (Eritrea): On behalf of my delegation, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over this important special session of the General Assembly. Allow me also to extend the best wishes of my Government to the representatives gathered at this session. It is indeed an honour and a pleasure for my delegation to attend the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly to discuss the achievement of social development for all in this now-globalized world of ours.

When Eritrea emerged as Africa's youngest sovereign State in 1993, it inherited tremendous social and economic problems. Decades of foreign occupation, neglect and war had made their impact on all segments of Eritrean society and on all levels of national development. The economic, social and infrastructure standards and other common indicators of development levels suggested that nation-building had to start from scratch. The Government of the State of Eritrea believed that sustainable development could be achieved only with the development of the Eritrean human person. The development of human resources virtually depends on education and training, with education being the priority.

Since independence, the Government's vision of a new Eritrea has focused on creating a modern, market-oriented economy with a leading role for the private sector. That is an overriding national development objective. To achieve that objective, the Government developed an integrated national development plan whose major components are: development of human resources, with education and health as key inputs; promotion of the private sector; development of infrastructure to remove critical bottlenecks; development of industry and agriculture; restoration and protection of the environment; introduction of comprehensive national security schemes; rehabilitation of vulnerable groups; and promotion of gender issues.

Macro and sectoral policies have been formulated to respond to present and future needs. These are intended to serve fundamental principles, which include the maintenance of national unity, renewal of active participation by the population, and recognition of the decisive role of the human factor in working towards the prevalence of social justice, internal dynamism and effective governance. Although the level of social development in Eritrea today is still comparatively low, a great deal has been achieved in education, especially in building school facilities and making education accessible to children in their own mother tongue, and currently about 52 per cent of all school-age children attend school. The same can be said about the health sector. Other sectors, particularly infrastructure, including road construction and communication, have attained the minimum standards in terms of the services required for economic takeoff. These improvements are most noticeable in the countryside.

The private sector has been a focus of attention. The reintegration and rehabilitation programmes for disadvantaged groups that have so far been implemented have shown remarkable results. Indeed, all the achievements made are quantitatively significant and have contributed much to the positive change in the quality of life and the attitude of the Eritrean people.

The progress achieved to date, however, should only be considered the beginning. We are fully aware that there are many challenges ahead of us. It is these challenges that the Government of the State of Eritrea is addressing with its limited resources.

I would have wished to dwell more on the development opportunities that could be realized in Eritrea. But the present situation in the country is overwhelmed by external threats. Allow me, therefore, to talk a bit about these threats, since they have a tremendous negative impact on our effort to provide development opportunities for our people.

One of the major impediments to development in Eritrea is the current war with neighbouring Ethiopia. The war with Ethiopia, which broke out in 1998, has resulted in the wanton destruction of property. The invading Ethiopian forces destroyed the social and economic development infrastructure that had been built over the past eight years of freedom and peace. Ethiopian troops systematically looted, burned and destroyed with explosives private and public property in all the areas they occupied. In addition to the deaths of many civilians, mostly women, children and the elderly, Ethiopia's invasion also led to the displacement of about 1.6 million people in Eritrea. This displacement figure, which amounts to more than one third of Eritrea's population, has been confirmed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Indeed, Ethiopia's invasion has led to a major humanitarian crisis that ought to draw the attention of the international community.

To compound the injustices the Ethiopian regime has committed against Eritreans, that regime also deported over 70,000 Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin from Ethiopia under the most inhuman conditions. All of them had their property confiscated, and most families were separated.

This is a very traumatic experience that has been perpetrated against the Eritrean people by Ethiopian regimes for a second time, with a respite of only one decade. Ethiopia has this time deliberately targeted not only the human resource of Eritrea, but also the development gains Eritrea has made since its independence in 1993. This is indeed a crime. What is more painfully unjustifiable, however, is the apparent silence of the international community in the face of this naked crime.

Conflicts pose serious obstacles to the attainment of social development. Sustainable development is unattainable without peace. The ambitious targets and policy objectives articulated at this special session of the world body will remain mere platitudes for many countries unless they are accompanied by concrete measures of collective action and solidarity against injustice, war and aggression. I therefore appeal to those present here to devote special attention at this session to the guarantees for social justice and the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Danzannorov Boldbaatar, Chairman of the delegation of Mongolia.

Mr. Boldbaatar (Mongolia): The peaceful advancement of the human family and its safe livelihood can no longer be sustained in a world permeated by abject poverty, the external debt burden, growing technological and economic gaps between the rich and the poor, widespread hunger and malnutrition, violence and discrimination, drugs and infectious

diseases. Mindful of the urgency to adequately tackle these problems, the international community has addressed them by, inter alia, organizing a series of world summits and conferences and by proclaiming and observing United Nations decades and international years on specific social issues and target groups. The Copenhagen Social Summit was one such world forum. It demonstrated that social development is indeed a question of global concern, and therefore the implementation of its decisions requires special attention. The cumulative result of the conferences offers a strong basis for promoting development cooperation and identifying the United Nations role of the United Nations in this area.

Development cooperation has rightly been given people-centred, sustainable gender-sensitive and social dimensions. Mongolia attaches great importance to the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly under the theme "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world". We note with appreciation the Secretary-General's comprehensive report, which provides us with a clear overview of the progress achieved during the last five years and the challenges that lay ahead. We believe that achieving the goals of Copenhagen will require much more comprehensive action, political will and adequate financial resources.

Mongolia, like many other countries undergoing fundamental changes, has been grappling with the challenges of transition for the past 10 years. Market reforms have been boldly accelerated by the liberalization of trade and prices and by large-scale privatization and other economic measures. Following the Copenhagen Summit, in 1995, the Government of Mongolia introduced a two-phased national unemployment reduction programme covering the years 1996-2000 and 2000-2010. This programme is being implemented in close synergy with the national poverty alleviation programme and the national plan of action for the advancement of women.

The main policy measures aimed at reducing unemployment and promoting productive employment included, inter alia, institutional capacity-building; improving the legal framework with regard to labour relations; promoting self-employment; promoting cooperatives; mobilizing local resources for employment generation; and training and retraining programmes. Aside from those measures, unemployment benefits and tuition expenses for retraining the jobless have been introduced as part of a safety net. The national poverty alleviation programme sets forth the task of supporting employment of the poor segments of the society, promoting education and medical services, and setting up and strengthening a network of social welfare and care for the extremely poor.

Recently, the Government of Mongolia has adopted the second phase of the national poverty alleviation programme, entitled the National Programme for Support of Household Livelihood Capacity. This new Programme is close to family or household issues. In other words, it will cover issues pertaining to all members of the family, including children and youths and disabled and elderly persons.

In the last 10 years, the country developed a relatively sound system of data collection on employment and poverty issues. As a result, an institutional structure for overseeing social welfare services and activities was put in place. The surveys conducted jointly by the National Statistical Office and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1995 and 1998 show that despite an increase in the workforce resulting from steady population growth, the rate of employment had been dropping, thus breeding poverty. The poverty growth index in 1995 was 10.9 per cent, and in 1998 it was 11.7 per cent. Therefore, much still needs to be done.

To adequately address social problems, the Government of Mongolia is mobilizing all possible resources and means and is implementing different programmes and projects. For these reasons, in the foreseeable future external assistance and support will still be important.

Last month, we held a seminar in Mongolia supported by UNDP and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) on the emerging concept of human security. The debate here at this special session echoes much of our discussion during that seminar. Employment is a basic precondition for ensuring human security at the level of households. Health, as well, is one of the important components of basic human needs and that of human security. An individual living in any country today links his or her daily life guarantees to the security of his or her own life and that of his or her family, income and the future of their children.

Finally, I am confident that this special session of the General Assembly will mark an important step towards advancing social development and implementing of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

President Obasanjo: Let me first say that I am happy to see you presiding over this Assembly. I am sure that, under your able guidance, this session will achieve its set objectives. May I, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, convey to you and the members of your Bureau our deep appreciation for making this important occasion a reality.

I also wish to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his very capable team for the excellent report that has provided the basis for the work of this session. My sincere gratitude and appreciation also go to the Government and people of Switzerland who accepted to host this Summit. We have, since our arrival, been treated to the sumptuous hospitality for which this country has become well known.

We in developing countries attach great importance to this gathering, which we hope will give delegations the opportunity to debate and adopt a document that will go a long way towards assuring our people improved quality of life. Five years ago, the largest-ever gathering of heads of State and Government converged in Copenhagen and committed itself to certain principles of social development. Among other things, world leaders committed themselves to creating an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that would enable people to achieve a better standard of living.

Towards this end, national Governments were enjoined to provide a stable legal framework, in accordance with their respective Constitutions and consistent with international law and obligations, that includes and promotes equality and equity between women and men; full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law; access to justice; the elimination of all forms of discrimination; transparent and accountable governance and administration; and the encouragement of partnership with free and representative organizations of civil society.

They also pledged to collectively address the underlying causes of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion in order to improve the quality of life for all our peoples. Other commitments that were entered into at Copenhagen included creating the necessary enabling environment that would help people to achieve social development; eradicating poverty by a target date; supporting full employment as a basic policy goal; attaining universal and equitable access to education and primary health care; accelerating the development of Africa and the least developed countries; ensuring that structural adjustment programmes include resources allocated to social development objectives; increasing resources allocated to social development; and strengthening cooperation for social development through the United Nations. In short, at Copenhagen, the international community attempted to place people at the centre of development. It was a unique opportunity for the international community to open a new chapter of cooperation in the implementation of the social development agenda.

As many will recall, I attended that meeting and was therefore a first-hand observer of the overwhelming resolve of the international community to pursue people-centred social development. But I did not return to my country to witness this social transformation. On the contrary, I returned to my country to become a direct victim of the very vices which the Summit had sought to eradicate. I was immediately apprehended on my arrival on a trumped-up charge of planning a coup — a thing I could not do even when I was in uniform. I was subsequently imprisoned. My real offence, if an offence it was, was that I stood and campaigned solidly for democracy and good governance. And so it was that my ordeal seemed to throw into question the very rationale behind the principles of justice enunciated in the Copenhagen Declaration.

My own experience was not, however, unique. There were many such instances, which only go to illustrate the continuing resistance to the type of changes envisaged in the Copenhagen Declaration. My only happiness is that, in spite of this resistance, the world has continued to move forward and great strides have been recorded in the implementation of the commitments entered into in 1995. The world has

gained many success stories to tell since the last Summit.

No one should deny that we have made significant social and economic gains in the last few decades. Life expectancy in developing countries has increased from 46 to 64 years. The infant mortality rate has been reduced by 50 per cent, while there has been a more than 80 per cent increase in the proportion of children enrolled in primary schools. Access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation has similarly been doubled.

But the picture is not as rosy as it seems. The progress is not at all universal and, in many instances, things have got worse. The resistance which I talked about earlier still continues in many forms and in many countries. A large proportion of humanity still remains desperately poor. In this respect, I could not agree more with the observation of Secretary-General Kofi Annan that extreme poverty is an affront to our common humanity and makes many other problems worse.

This special session is taking place at a time when there is a crisis of legitimacy about globalization, in part because sufficient attention has not been given to its social dimensions and implications, especially the growing inequities and the marginalization of large parts of the developing world. At the last summit meeting of the leaders of the South countries, which was held in Havana, Cuba, and which I had the honour and privilege to chair, the impact of globalization on the economies of developing countries was thoroughly analysed and debated.

In the end, the Group of 77 agreed that globalization is a process which can be uneven and unpredictable, but that if it is properly harnessed and managed, the foundations for enduring and equitable growth at the international and national levels can be laid. The Group of 77 therefore agreed to respond to globalization with a view to making it beneficial for all countries and all peoples, and to actively promote effective participation by developing countries in international economic policy decision-making in the context of the globalizing world economy.

Despite the fact that many Governments, especially in developing countries, have made poverty alleviation goals the centre of their national policy agendas and have adopted programmes and strategies aimed at poverty reduction, poverty in our countries is on the increase. Its eradication therefore remains the greatest challenge facing most developing countries. Central to poverty alleviation is the issue of employment, a sector which has basically stagnated in most developing countries. Governments are constrained by policies of fiscal and budgetary austerity which were imposed on them by the international financial institutions. These imposed austerity measures leave Governments with hardly any resources to initiate job-creation programmes that will lead to gainful employment for young people in the productive sector of the economy.

In his report on the Millennium Assembly (A/54/2000), the Secretary-General painted a stark picture of this phenomenon, when he said that the world was facing a major challenge of youth unemployment, which was an outgrowth of the youth bulge. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has estimated that 60 million young people are searching for work but cannot find any. This is a situation which creates ripples in other areas of our social existence, such as criminality, including trans-border criminal offences. It can rightly be said that unemployment is the mother of almost all other social problems facing humanity today, among which one can count prostitution, drug-trafficking and trafficking in human beings, to mention but a few.

In this connection, the proposal by the Secretary-General to establish a high-level policy network on youth employment is a highly commendable initiative. I wish to assure him of the full support of the Group of 77 and China in the pursuit of this endeavour.

Although a lot has been achieved in the field of human health, and although life expectancy has increased, especially in developed countries, a recent report of the World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that the poor are disproportionately affected by diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and so on. More than 95 per cent of HIV infections are in developing countries, with about 70 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, while 300 million are affected by malaria annually, of whom 2 million die. There is an increasing need for a concerted international effort to combat the spread of these diseases. In that connection, I wish to assure the Secretary-General of the full commitment of African countries to the Roll Back Malaria campaign of the World Health Organization, as demonstrated by the recent summit which took place in Abuja, Nigeria, where a definitive plan of action was at the core of the many important decisions that were

reached on how to combat this deadly disease in Africa.

Let me mention here that a key decision of the Group of 77 summit in Havana was the establishment of a South-South health delivery programme to support medical services in many of the poorer member countries. I am glad to report that the implementation of this programme is well under way in Abuja, Nigeria, from which it is being coordinated.

Education in most developing countries has not fared any better, though we all agree that it is the cardinal aspect of all developmental policies and plans. Education is the key to the new global knowledge- and technology-driven economy; and in developing countries education can provide us with the opportunity to overcome many of the obstacles which impede our social and economic transformation. In my country, great attention is being devoted to education, especially to basic education, which will equip our young people with the opportunities they need to optimize their potential and make positive contributions to society.

Our commitment to accelerating the development of Africa and of the least developed countries remains largely unfulfilled. In the Secretary-General's report on the Millennium Assembly, he observed:

> "Nowhere is a global commitment to poverty reduction needed more than in Africa south of the Sahara, because no region of the world endures greater human suffering. The latest estimates indicate that sub-Saharan Africa has the largest proportion of people who live on less than $1 a day. ... In the 1990s, [Africa] grew more slowly than any other group of middle- or low-income countries." (*A/54/2000, para. 139*)

While private capital flows to Africa are a tiny fraction of global flows, capital flight from some of those countries is several times more than their gross domestic product, and total outstanding external debt exceeds entire gross national products, with some countries using more than 25 per cent of export earnings to service debt. Extractive industries dominate the region's economy, depleting resources at an alarming rate.

The problems that face humanity are enormous. But by placing the concerns of the people at the centre of planning and decision-making processes, we have begun the countdown in earnest. All we need now is the necessary political will and we shall overcome the remaining pockets of resistance which impede social progress and the attainment of a better life for all humankind.

The burden of external debt continues to weigh heavily on many Group of 77 countries, constituting a serious obstacle in their efforts to achieve social objectives of development. Debt service ratio remains very high, making it extremely difficult to mobilize local resources that can propel social renewal and poverty eradication. The latest World Bank report indicates that the heavy flow of aid into our countries from the two international lending agencies did little to ignite sustained economic growth. Indeed, sub-Saharan Africa, which was considered more advanced in the early 1960s than some other regions in the developing world, receded in the last three decades of the last century. The report indicates that 48 African countries have a collective economic output that does not surpass that of Belgium. The question is begged: have the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, perhaps unwittingly, made Africa poorer through unwholesome policies?

In this connection, the world must heed the World Bank's call on rich countries to open their markets to imports from Africa. The World Bank had observed in its report that wealthy nations collectively spend $300 billion to subsidize and protect their farmers against foreign competition. This figure equals Africa's total annual output. Hence it can be seen that Africa is suffering double jeopardy: first, from the burden of external debt that leaves them with no resources to incite social renewal and, secondly, from the protectionist policies of the advanced countries against imports from developing countries.

Our presence here today is a testimony of our collective will to look into areas where progress has not been made with a view to rectifying past deficiencies. Meeting our set target of putting people at the centre of all development, but particularly social development, requires resources that are disproportionately distributed among us. If we are to target our energies towards addressing the eradication of poverty, providing employment and promoting social justice and social integration, the debt issue in developing countries must be seriously addressed and permanently resolved. Creditor nations must immediately commit themselves to debt remission for developing countries, so as to provide these countries

with the basis for economic renewal and social advancement.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the world has the capacity to eradicate poverty, and this session should give us the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to give our peoples hope and assurance for enhanced quality of life. They need it, and they must not be denied.

The President: I thank the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for his statement.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.